

THE
STEP-MOTHER:

A DOMESTIC TALE,
FROM REAL LIFE.

VOL. II.



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FROM REAL LIFE.

BY HELENA WELLS,
OF CHARLESTOWN, SOUTH CAROLINA.

“Spirits are not finely touched but to fine issues, nor Nature
never lends the smallest scruple of her excellence; but, like
a thrifty goddess, she determines herself the glory of a cre-
ditor, both thanks and use.”

SHAKESPEARE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

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CHAP. XVI.

“ We must not stint our necessary actions in the
fear to cope malicious censures.”

SHAKESPEARE.

MR. Glanville and Mr. Ellifon soon took their leave. Mr. Caldwell remained at my desire; as there were many papers to arrange, and much business to transact, I could not well have done without his assistance. My dear Emma too exerted herself not a little. Being frequently alone with Mr. Caldwell, and not having her mind engrossed by one subject as mine was, she had an opportunity of studying his character more minutely than, I believe, he imagined.

“Your friend has been very lucky, Mrs. Glanvile,” said he to her one day: “what a charming fortune she will have; and then the entire guardianship of four fine young women; but if they knew the widow as well as you and I do,” looking significantly, “she would bear the *belle* from them all.” “Whom do you mean, sir?” said Mrs. Glanvile. “Why, the young men of the age, who are on the look-out, to be sure.” Luckily for her, the subject of the conversation entered at that moment, which prevented a reply; and the man had not penetration enough to discern the contemptuous glance she threw away upon him.

This was an unpropitious day for the attorney. Soon after Emma retired; and I entered upon the subject of the Miss Wentworths fortune, the first time it had ever been started. After mentioning to him the mode in which I chose to have the money remitted, he appeared to be calculating something on a sheet of paper before him. “Let me see now,” said he, “after their board is paid, what will they have

have to spend? Two and two is four, and three makes seven." "Sir! board! did you say, sir? Mr. Wentworth's daughters pay board! To whom, pray? Surely, when I have educated them so far, I should not place them under any other person's care now." "I did not imagine you would, madam; but they will pay *you* so much a-year for living in your house, won't they, eh?" "Was it not their father's, sir? Could you suppose I ever harboured such an intention? Out of their own incomes I intend they shall defray the charges of their education, wearing apparel, and pocket money, with a view that they may study frugality and economy; but this house, *my* table, carriage, and servants, shall always be as much theirs as if their father were living; to act otherwise would be to prove myself unworthy of his generous bequests, and the sacred trust reposed in me." "Very true, ma'am, as you say; 'tis very true: but how should I divine that these were your sentiments; you never communicated them to me before?" "No, sir; nor was it absolutely

necessary now." He bit his lip, and seemed not a little mortified at being reminded, that he had no authority over me or my girls.

When I related this conversation to Mrs. Glanville, she told me of their short dialogue; we were both happy that she had not communicated it earlier, as, perhaps, the recollection of the words uttered by him might have made me express myself with more asperity; and it was certainly better to avoid giving offence, if possible. After this specimen of the man, you will believe he soon received his dismissal from me.

Mr. Wentworth had but a slight acquaintance with this worthy limb of the law, whose partner, a much older man, had been his father's attorney, and, in the routine of business, became his. He was employed by Mr. Ellison and others of his friends: he was punctual in all money transactions, and extremely attentive to the interests of his clients, which was all that was necessary in his connexion with him. I suppose, when he named Mr. Caldwell

Caldwall as one of the eventual guardians to his daughters, he thought there was but a remote probability of his being called upon to exert the power of one; and Mr. Ellifson the other, being a younger man, was at least as likely to be his co-adjutor. Of *his* attachment to the family, and disinterested probity, he was well assured. I could not make Mr. and Mrs. Glanville reason in this way; nothing less than my positively declaring, that I considered any reflection cast upon the actions of my husband as an imputation upon my own character, would have hindered them from loudly exclaiming against his having put it into this man's head, that he might possible one day become the sole guardian of my daughters; for Mr. Ellifson appeared hastening to his grave.

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After a minute investigation of all pecuniary matters, I found my own income, including Mrs. Belton's legacy, and what little property I had acquired before marriage, amounted to 1000*l.* a year, besides my annuity of 200*l.* originally settled on

me by her for life. Added to this, Mr. Wentworth's share of the prizes, and money lying at the banker's, was likely to realize 10,000*l.* which both Mr. Glanville and Mr. Ellifon advised me to lay out in purchasing an estate, which, in the event of a peace, might either be sold to advantage, or leased out profitably, from the number of people likely to be returning to this country, laden with spoils, (some of them, it is true, but very unfairly got,) who might wish for a pleasant retreat to spend them in; and at this time lands were a mere drug. This business I left entirely to them; and in a short time it was accomplished much to my satisfaction.

From Mr. Wentworth's long absence, I had found it necessary to make myself acquainted with the management of my family out of doors, as well as those within; and was happy to find my attention rewarded by the improved appearance of every thing around me. My crops of hay were better; and in short, at the close of every year, I found myself richer, as well as my grounds beautified. While
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buoyed up with the hope of receiving my beloved Wentworth in his native fields, I had every incitement to cultivating them: but when this spring of action was crushed, every beautiful shrub which I had tended, and every flower of my own planting, which I had carefully watered, served to awaken recollections, that enervated my mind, and unfitted me for the task I had voluntarily imposed upon myself—that of introducing into life four lovely interesting young women, who looked up to me as their only support.

Till six months of my widowhood were expired, I did not communicate my intentions even to Mrs. Glanville; they were these: Clarmont was so generally admired, I was pretty confident of getting an unexceptionable tenant for it, whenever I declared that I wished for one. When Mr. Wentworth was in the West Indies, he had disposed of his house in this way, when it was not near so commodious, nor the grounds in such good order: his doing so was a precedent for me. The estate
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lately purchased had a large family mansion on it, much out of repair; indeed the place wanted a family to take possession, and to reside on it for some time, in order to give it a habitable appearance. The park too and *environs* were in sad order. I had the vanity to think, that a little money, expended under my own eye, would enhance its value; while under the direction of another, I was certain much might be lavished to very little purpose.

I had still another motive for wishing to change the scene. From the first of our marriage, I entreated Mr. Wentworth not to enter into the round of unmeaning visits, which generally fill up the principal part of a country life. As I meant to adhere to the same rules for the Miss Wentworths that had been so ably sketched by Lady Glanville for her daughters, I knew the impracticability of doing so, without setting out with a fixed resolution to have our time at our own command. We had set dinners, to which all our neighbours in rotation were invited; and we visited them
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in the same manner: morning loungers, however, were a species of people who found no amusement within our walls: the grounds were open to them for their walks, or rides, if they preferred them to their own; and if Mr. Wentworth met any in his rambles, he invited them in, to take some refreshment, or to partake of a family dinner; but till the hour appointed for that meal, none of the female part of the family were visible. After Mr. Wentworth went abroad, you may believe I lived still more retired. Now that my two elder girls were of an age to mix with the world, I wished them to enter more into society; and had their father lived to return, it was his intention, on their account, to have changed his mode of living, and to spend some part of the winter in the metropolis.

In my peculiar circumstances, to have adopted such a plan on the spot where we had been so reclus, would have subjected me to the most terrible censures. None would have had the liberality to impute

my conduct to the cause from whence it sprung. My own fondness for company would be generally credited, and my hypocrisy in concealing my real disposition, as long as it was my interest to do so, as universally inveighed against. The poor girls too would be pitied in the strongest language, for their father's folly in leaving them so much in the power of a mother-in-law, by selfish beings, who cared not what became of them.

Those who have lived in a narrow circle will easily conceive that this would be the probable consequence of my remaining at Clarmont, unless I sacrificed my own ideas of propriety, in order to preserve the good opinion of my neighbours. From having formerly dared to think for ourselves, and Mr. Wentworth's singular will, I was become an object of more importance in their eyes, than from my moderate station I should otherwise have been. Mrs. Glanvile, as usual, came to me whenever I needed her assistance, besides bringing along with her her husband's

husband's advice; Lady Glanville, who always interested herself about me, also gave her opinion: in this instance I found they were unanimous in approving of my resolution. By my change of habitation, I would also be many miles nearer these invaluable friends; which, though they were still too distant to be neighbours, might facilitate the communication between the two families, which, on every account, was desirable.

I took advantage of my friend's being at Clarmont to preside over my girls, to go across the country to Mr. Ellifon's, who attended me to make a survey of the repairs absolutely necessary to be done to the old house, previous to our removal. I found it in much better condition than I expected, and soon set a number of people to work. Several families around came to welcome me to their neighbourhood. I was a novelty, and stood in need of nothing but civility; therefore their offers of service were profuse. I was not a little pleased to ob-

serve, that there were many young people in the vicinity; for I wished to make my house sufficiently cheerful, to supersede the necessity of going much to London, or any public place, in search of amusements.

CHAP. XVII.

"I could not stay behind you;
"My desire, more sharp than filed steel,
"Did spur me forth."

SHAKESPEARE.

Not to fatigue you with uninteresting details, imagine me settled at Merton-Place, Clarmont properly disposed of, and myself entering my second year of widowhood. At home all was peace and harmony, and the society from without pleasanter than could be expected, where selection was not permitted. Mrs. Ellifson had frequently solicited a visit from Charlotte. Though I was not fond of letting any of my daughters be much from under my own eye at their critical age, as Mr. Ellifson was their father's relation, and the only one I was at all acquainted with, I knew not how to resist. At his house she saw a great deal of company, particularly gentlemen: Mr. Ellifson having been formerly in the East Indies, his acquaintance were very numerous.

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In this circle my daughter's modest diffidence, added to real good sense, with some share of beauty and native elegance, attracted a number of admirers. From Mrs. Ellison I heard of two, who appeared serious in their addresses—one a pert young coxcomb, who had just buried his father, and was so full of his own consequence as to suppose a country girl, who had never had any pretty things said to her, would be immediately struck with his person and accomplishments; while, on the contrary, his flippancy disgusted her so much, that her natural sincerity would hardly permit her to be commonly civil to him.

The other from the contrast appeared to great advantage; though little more than six and thirty, from a long residence in eastern climes he looked past the meridian of life. Although irresistibly attracted by a delicacy and simplicity, he had in vain sought for among those who composed the gay circle he had moved in since his return to his native country: he feared his cause to be desperate; and imputed
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the pleasure with which Charlotte listened to his accounts of the countries he had visited, to a natural desire of knowledge, and as a relief from the unmeaning jargon of his rival, whom he heartily despised.

Mrs. Ellifon owned herself she knew not what judgment to form; as, however, both parties were unexceptionable in point of fortune and rank in life, she advised me to recall Charlotte, in order to judge whether their attachment was sufficiently strong to induce them to follow her to my house; because from my known strictness, a formal declaration of their pretensions would be necessary, in order to gain admittance there.—They were both too much under the dominion of the blind god to give up the pursuit; though I sincerely believe the young squire was more influenced by vanity, and a desire to mortify Mr. Austen, than any more laudable motive. I very soon settled the point with him; for Charlotte absolutely refused to see the gentleman; and unless I had received him on her account, he was not by any means the kind of character I should have

have wished to establish as a visitor in my family.

Mr. Austen, with the respectful politeness of a man who knew the world, solicited, by letter, permission to wait upon me, while Mr. Garnham rung at the gate, and gave his horse to his servant, with all the freedom of an old acquaintance who had been assured of a welcome reception. At first sight Mr. Austen prepossessed me in his favor. I however thought him too old for Charlotte. After paying me some compliments on possessing such a daughter, and the credit she did to my care of her mental qualifications, he explained his present circumstances and future views, at the same time requested only to be received in my family as the friend of Mr. Ellifon, observing that so young a woman who had seen but little of life, was hardly herself capable of judging of her own sentiments; the preference which she had shewn him when in company with her other admirer, had in no degree elated him, as it was necessary to have our taste completely vitiated by fashion, before it
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were possible to bear with such effrontery.

On the footing prescribed by himself, I consented he should visit at my house; and added, that as I meant to pass some of the winter in London, he might there have a better opportunity of studying her character and disposition towards him than in more confined society. He thanked me in the warmest manner for my candour, but had the mortification of departing without seeing his mistress, from her being out on an equestrian party with some of our neighbours. I however understood, when she returned, they had met on the road; nor did she dissemble the pleasure she had experienced from the rencontre. Her innocence never suspected his errand, nor the motive of his attentions to her.

When informed of Mr. Garnham's having called to see her, she expressed no other sentiment except astonishment at his assurance. I told her I suppose compassion had led him to pay his compliments to so many ladies in order to storm the castle: he had, however, met with a severe repulse in my coldness; for I nei-
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ther asked him to prolong his stay, or to repeat his visit, Mrs. Ellifon having mentioned to me, that if he once got footing, it would be difficult to keep him at a proper distance. I did not wish to feed her vanity, by explaining that it was on her account that these gentlemen had called at my house; the female mind being sufficiently prone to admit the inroads of this guest, without any aid, save its own reflections.

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Mr. Austen continued his attentions; and on our removal to town, became the escort of the whole family: he was so universally respected and known in the best circles, that I found him a very valuable acquaintance. Those who were desirous of knowing who we were, had easy access to him; and you will believe, his report of a family he was so desirous of being allied to would not be an unfavourable one. With the fairest character, he had been fortunate enough to acquire a sufficient portion of wealth to satisfy his utmost ambition, before his constitution had suffered much from

from the climate. If he did not marry, he assured me he would return to India; for the mode of living generally adopted by single men in London did not accord with his ideas of propriety. After an excursion to the Continent, he proposed domesticating, and settling in the country, where he still hoped to prevail on Charlotte to share his fortune with him.

Till the arrival of the Glanville family I did not go much into public, knowing the consequence it would be of to my girls being introduced under their auspices. They were detained much longer in the country than they expected, by a slight indisposition of Lady Glanville. Unfortunately before they came, half the time I had limited myself to stay in town was elapsed.

After so long a separation, you will easily conceive my emotions at the sight of my revered benefactress: the conflicts we had both undergone, the losses we had sustained, all rushed into my mind; nor was her ladyship less affected. It is too much, my dear Caroline, said she; I cannot

not embrace you, without remembering scenes, which ought long ere this to have been buried in oblivion : but the Almighty is all-powerful and gracious, and when he deems it fit to deprive us of blessings, shall we dare to repine at his decrees ? She knew not that these words pierced me to the soul ; and thought the tremor that seized me proceeded from respect to her feelings, and the recollection of Mr. Wentworth's death ; while along with these there was still a severer pang. Though innocent in her eyes as well as in my own intentions, if certain circumstances were related to her, she might consider me as the fatal cause of all her sorrows. The consciousness of this had hitherto kept me at a distance from her ; nor did it forsake me in this interview.

During the few weeks I remained in London, our families were much together. Lady George and Lady Darnley were as attentive to my daughters as Mrs. Glanville : one or other of them always accompanied us to any public place, and we were generally of their parties at home.

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home. We did not separate without making various arrangements for the ensuing summer, which we hoped to pass at each others houses, or in excursions, as I wished to shew my girls a little of their native country, fearing too, that if I kept them constantly at home, it might be rendered less agreeable.

I was, however, not a little delighted at hearing them remark to each other, that town was very well for a change; but to live always there would require great strength of constitution, and a taste wholly opposite to theirs. Charlotte very gravely added, that she supposed it possible to live much in it without becoming dissipated; though to be sure, in the country there was less likelihood of being so, and fewer temptations to swerve from rectitude; for which reason she should prefer living there; though she believed women had seldom the power of chusing their place of residence. This reflection did not pass unnoticed by me. Mr. Austen's attentions have made some impression: they have led her to think of *man*
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as a *lord* and *master*, from whose *will* there is no appeal. *His* I was convinced would never be exerted merely to shew his prerogative, but for the happiness of those with whom he was connected. From the marked attentions he had always paid her when in general companies, as well as in private, where there were women of superior rank and beauty, she could not avoid perceiving the decided preference which he wished to shew for her society and conversation; and so little was she disposed to play the coquette, as to treat every other person with that cold politeness, which soon convinced them it was to no purpose attempting to rival Mr. Austen in her good graces.

The more intimately I became acquainted with this gentleman, the more I was inclined to rejoice at the prospect of his union with my family. His marrying their eldest sister would give my girls a male protector; the possession of which to young women is, on many occasions, a point of great importance.

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Should I be taken from them, I was convinced both of his ability and inclination to manage their pecuniary concerns for their advantage; which otherwise might fall altogether into the hands of my quondam friend the lawyer; Mr. Ellison having lately fallen a sacrifice to a liver complaint, contracted during his residence in the east.

Views of a prudential nature had however no influence on Charlotte's mind. She truly loved Mr. Austen; and when he formally declared the passion she had inspired, she was astonished to find how little she had the power of bestowing her heart, that having been long since in his possession. To postpone their union to any distant period, was never my intention. Mr. Austen was now so domesticated in our family circle, that the sooner he became a member of it the better; many wise folks having taken into their heads to imagine, that "the widow" was the real object of his pursuit. Before we fulfilled any of our excursive engagements with the Glanvilles, by leading
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ing my eldest daughter to the altar, he acquired a right to become my *cecisbio*, in spite of all those malevolent reports which had been pretty freely circulated in our neighbourhood.

CHAP. XVIII.

“Which of them is dearest to me, I’ve no skill in sense to make distinction.” SHAKESPEARE.

THIS summer flew swiftly away. At Lord George Selby’s beautiful seat in Norfolk, we passed several weeks. Mr. and Mrs. Glanville having joined us there, we proceeded to Yarmouth, to enjoy the benefit of sea-bathing, and the amusements generally to be met with at watering-places; all which were entered into with avidity by my two younger girls, not without occasioning me some degree of concern; though I determined to shorten my stay, rather than deprive them while there of participating in those pleasures in which they seemed to take such delight.

Mr. Austen on our journey to the metropolis, reminded me of his proposed continental tour; hoped I would start no objections to one of my girls accompanying their sister, as she had built much on

the pleasure she should feel, provided this met my approbation. I could not withhold my consent, though it was reluctantly given. Clara and Emily were both too young to go from under my own wing.

Alicia had a steadiness of temper, and propriety of manner and conduct seldom the attendants of so early an age. This did not proceed from apathy of soul. In her friendships she was ardent; and her heart was ever open to the tale of woe, which she endeavoured to alleviate by every means in her power. In the country she was my chief almoner; and has often prevailed on her sisters to retrench some superfluities, in order that they might buy clothes for poor children; which she assisted them to make. To lose such an endearing companion, and at the same time to part with Mr. and Mrs. Austen was truly distressing; yet when I thought what a valuable acquisition she would be to them, I determined to make the sacrifice. In advising with her, Charlotte would always do right; on the contrary, Emily or Clara would naturally look up to her; and a young woman
married

married to a man considerably older than herself, very frequently stands in need of a faithful monitor; such I knew Alicia would be; for no fear of offending would make her deviate from what she knew to be the right path. At Yarmouth I had had frequent opportunities of admiring her inflexibility, when she little thought I witnessed it.

From these traits of my second daughter's disposition, you will believe if I had any partiality it would be towards her. I however freely confess, that though I could converse with Alicia on subjects that would not have interested either of her sisters, yet in each individual I found some prominent feature, that gave me equal satisfaction; and I doubted not that all would inherit a sufficient portion of their father's amiable qualities, to make me always feel a mother's tenderness for them.

Clara had an openness and warmth of heart, which I was confident might lead her to trust too implicitly to the judgment of those who, having first studied her ruling passion, would take the trouble of making her

her believe they were deeply interested in her happiness. Her proneness to acknowledge herself in fault, when made sensible of having acted wrong, which was no difficult matter to accomplish, was in my opinion a sure proof of the nobleness of her nature; for little minds are ever desirous of excluding conviction, and conceive that to own themselves in the wrong, though they are probably convinced that they are so, would be to derogate from their consequence: when the very act implies that they are wiser than they were before; consequently they have added to rather than diminished their importance.

Emily, you will recollect, was a native of the torrid zone; nor did she inherit a small portion of the vivacity and volatility of her country. To correct her was hardly possible, and to offend her as difficult; for she was never out of humour with herself or any one else. To direct the effervescence of her animal spirits to proper objects, was all I could attempt: had she lived with those who were inclined to amuse themselves with her flights, they might have had a dan-

a dangerous tendency ; but being always under the watchful care of a parent, they were repressed without wounding her feelings by severity, which she could very ill have borne.

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On our arrival in London, Mr. Austen was called upon to perform a very painful office. A gentleman with whom he had lived in habits of intimacy at Calcutta, and who, when he quitted it, meditated coming home in two or three years, had been under the necessity of leaving his affairs unsettled ; being summoned to England as an evidence on a trial then pending before the House of Lords ; but before the vessel in which he embarked reached England, he paid the debt of nature, leaving the charge of his only daughter to his nearest friend Mr. Austen. I had several times heard him mention Miss Hartley as an amiable accomplished girl, whom he wished to introduce to my daughter, as soon as she became his wife. Her mother had been dead several years.

The marriage of this couple, like most early ones, was entered into without thought on either side. Mr. Hartley, after struggling with adverse circumstances for some years, having an appointment offered him in the East India service, poverty staring him in the face at home, at last determined on tearing himself from his family. On the voyage he had the good fortune to conciliate the regard of a gentleman high in office, who was his fellow passenger, and who afterwards was of considerable service to him. Having contracted debts in England, and a wife and two children to support at a distance from himself, it is not to be presumed he could make a fortune very rapidly.

Mrs. Hartley, a timid woman, without strength of mind, suffered herself to be ruled by a darling son, whose extravagancies, notwithstanding the handsome remittances she received, made her always poor. Fearing to acquaint her husband with the truth, she gave up housekeeping, and went to board at the school where her daughter

daughter was completing her education, upon the pretext that she could not live without society. Young Hartley, having now no longer his mother's house to entertain his dissolute companions, broke through all restraint, becoming the hero of midnight quarrels, and a public disturber of the peace. Having formerly testified an inclination for the sea, he had been entered a midshipman; and while smarting for some of his misdeeds, he declared his resolution of going on board a man of war, provided his mother would furnish him with the means to get out of prison. This misjudging woman would hardly give her consent to the only measure which her friends thought could be adopted to save him from destruction; it being a point of the utmost consequence, placing him in a situation where he stood some chance of being estranged from his former associates. She lived but a short time after he went to sea; and so rooted was her fondness for him, that she constantly lamented having been prevailed on to banish him her presence.

Miss Hartley you will perceive had a bitter disappointment to encounter, on hearing from Mr. Austen of her father's death, at the time that she expected to receive his blessing, and to have the power of convincing him by her filial attentions, that his kindness and liberality had not been bestowed on an unworthy object. All my family, as well as myself, sympathised most sincerely with her on this trying occasion; and at my desire Mr. and Mrs. Austen brought her from Kensington to pass some time in our society, in order to blunt the edge of her affliction, by enjoying the benefit of rational conversation, during the interval prescribed by form for absenting from the world, after the death of so near a relation.

You will suppose, that under such circumstances, a beautiful young woman, possessed of a strong portion of sensibility, would attract in a great degree the attention of every individual who composed our domestic circle. When I add that there was a gentleness and fascination of manners about Miss Hartley that I scarcely
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ly ever saw equalled, and though apparently extremely diffident of her powers, that she was well read in history, as well as polite literature, and a most incomparable performer on the harpsichord, you can express no surprise at her becoming an universal favourite; and that when I found Mr. Austen was at a loss how to dispose of her during his absence, I immediately offered her an asylum under my roof, conceiving that her society would be a valuable acquisition both to myself and two daughters, when deprived of our usual companions Charlotte and Alicia.

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If I had never before received any proof of Mrs. Austen's affections and unbounded gratitude, her conduct at the time of separating from me would have amply repaid all my maternal cares and solicitude.

I was obliged to use the strongest language to convince her that she ran a great risk of losing her husband's affection, if she persisted in manifesting her dread of accompanying him on an excursion, which he had planned more for her amusement than

his own. I also represented to her his kind consideration, in requesting her favourite sister to join the party; when if he had followed the dictates of his own inclination, Emily would have been selected in her stead. She had acquired so great an ascendancy over him by her playfulness and mirth, he became insensibly attached to her as if she had been his child, and doubtless would have experienced much pleasure in hearing her innocent remarks on the countries they were to pass through. This reasoning had its desired effect: she set about the preparations for her journey with cheerful alacrity; and not till we finally bade adieu to each other on their embarking at Dover, did she express any sentiment of regret. The mind of her husband was then too much absorbed by his own feelings at parting, to have the power or inclination to blame her grief. *

Alicia, who had been temperate till this moment, could now scarcely bear the excess of her own emotions.—“ Clara, Emily,” said she, taking a hand of each; “ Love my mother as ye have hitherto done.

done. We can never sufficiently show our gratitude for her goodness.”—“ Miss Hartley, will you supply my place? these girls are too giddy to perform a thousand offices which I used to do with pleasure to my mother, and advantage to myself.” Miss Hartley assured her in return, that *her* humble endeavours should be exerted to make herself useful to me; and that being now deprived of both her parents, she would try to make Mrs. Wentworth look upon her in the light of a newly-found daughter.

After these mutual assurances we parted. Heavily enough did we drag onwards to the inn, while in imagination we were crossing to Calais. Finding it impossible to remain where every object reminded us of those whose society we had lost, I ordered horses, and proceeding to Canterbury that night, the next morning made the best of our way, by quick journies, to Merton-Place, where a variety of cares soon occupied my mind so fully, as to banish for a time those regrets which had

pervaded it during my stay in London, and while in daily expectation of separating from my children.

Managing all my pecuniary concerns myself, I had not a little to do to keep my accounts in proper order; looking forward, as I did, to rendering a faithful report of every transaction to the husbands of my daughters, or to themselves, when they became of age. I believe I omitted to state, that this was not to be demanded of me, till either all my girls attained the age of twenty-one, or had acquired legal protectors, by having entered into the holy state of matrimony. If I chose to relinquish the charge when they were eighteen, I might do it; but it could not be required of me. Corresponding with Mr. and Mrs. Austen, and Alicia, too, engrossed no small portion of my time and thoughts. The latter had often assisted me in transcribing letters of which I deemed it necessary to keep copies; and, possessing a clear head, with some knowledge of figures, frequently was of service

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to me in ascertaining whether my sums were accurate, at times when my own mind was so bewildered, by poring over books and papers, I was not very capable of judging of them myself. None of the present members of my family could I employ in this way, my daughters not being sufficiently steady; and, besides my dislike to letting a stranger into my family concerns, Miss Hartley always expressed the most rooted aversion to writing, which I believed her to be sincere in; for during the whole time she remained in my house, I scarce saw her take pen in hand; nor did she appear to have any correspondents, no letters being received by her while there.

CHAP. XIX.

“ This is a creature, would she begin a sect,
“ Might quench the zeal of all professors else;
“ Make profelytes of whom she but bid follow.”

SHAKESPEARE.

OCCUPIED as every moment of my time was, I left my daughters more to themselves than I had ever before done. I was the more disposed to do so, thinking them perfectly secure under Miss Hartley's care, who had attained her twenty-fifth year; and from the sketch I have already given of her accomplishments, you will conclude, had made most use of the opportunities for improvement, which she had enjoyed.

Though such a mistress of music, so little was she inclined to display her talents, we could scarce prevail on her to touch the instrument when strangers were present; yet, to oblige either of the family circle, she would play for hours, or devote a whole morning to teaching the girls her method of fingering, or how to execute a difficult passage in any of her favourite

avourite lessons, which I had expressed a wish that they could play in the style that she did. When in company, instead of appearing 'desirous of engrossing conversation, we were obliged to take some pains to make her speak at all; yet, when she was induced to favour us with her sentiments they were expressed with such modest diffidence, and clothed in language so elegant, that I jocularly termed her the orator of the family; adding that many of our public speakers, in the House of Commons and Court of King's Bench, would be glad to take lessons from her, if, after receiving her instructions, they were able to make their periods flow as mellifluously as hers did. She, however, "bore her faculties so meekly," as to occasion no jealousy or envy in either Clara or Emily, who enjoyed her praises more than they did their own; so unbounded was her influence over their minds.

You will not wonder that such winning attentions should give me pleasure, and that Miss Hartley soon established herself in my estimation, beyond the power of
any

any common occurrence to diminish her value.

Our letters from the continent contributed much to our amusement; the arrival of the post was indeed most anxiously anticipated by the young ladies, who devoured theirs with the avidity peculiar to their age. It gave me sincere pleasure to find I had not been mistaken in the opinion I had formed of Mr. Austen; and also that Charlotte was as truly his as ever. Alicia's details were full of the praises of her brother-in-law, and of eulogium on her sister's conduct as a wife: indeed I hoped I had secured to all Mr. Wentworth's daughters a valuable protector, should it be the will of Heaven to call me from them, while they were too young to guide themselves.

Our evenings were becoming very long, and I feared in the end would prove tedious, when our neighbourhood was enlivened by the entry of a marching regiment, which had been ordered there into winter-quarters. This occasioned a number of subscription balls, and other entertainments,

tainments, which the military know so well how to promote. The lieutenant-colonel brought his family with him, took a house of some consequence, where he entertained genteelly.

At the first ball our party was at after their arrival, an elegant young man, captain-lieutenant of the regiment, and a younger brother of the lieutenant-colonel, recognized my ward as an old acquaintance, whom he rejoiced to meet, requesting he might have the honor of dancing with her; which, on a reference to me, was readily complied with. When Captain Rooke intreated my permission for waiting on his fair partner the next day, I accorded it without hesitation; his having known the lady previous to her residence with me, and being brother to a gentleman whose family were visited by the first people in the county, were sufficient reasons for my so doing. I scarce thought of mentioning this circumstance to Miss Hartley, conceiving the gentleman had not made his application without first obtaining her consent.

When

When his name was announced, I was, you will believe, not a little surprised at hearing her desire the servant to say she was from home. On this occasion I became arbitrary; insisting, that as the gentleman had been ushered into the drawing room, she should receive him there; in future she might do as she pleased: but her non-appearance now would give so unfavourable an impression of the politeness of the inhabitants of Merton-Place, I could not allow her to be guilty of such rudeness. With the greatest reluctance she complied, leaving me in some degree of amazement; convinced that, from other parts of her conduct, she was not, in this instance, governed by caprice.

No sooner had the captain taken his leave, than I was accosted by Miss Hartley, who requested to speak to me in private.

When we were alone, she prefaced her communication by regretting, in the strongest terms possible, the family of the Rookes having come into our neighbourhood. She then stated, that while on
a visit

a visit to an old school fellow during the last winter, she had in her family met with Captain Rooke, who was supposed to be the suitor of her friend, not only by herself, but her father and mother, though she could see no reason they had for concluding so, as his visits to their house arose from the frequent invitations which he received from them. This conviction made her the less scrupulous of entering into conversation with him, though she avoided it, except when singled out as a partner at the assemblies which they frequented, or placed next him at table, &c.

On her return to Kensington, she was surprised one morning by a visit from the gentleman; in which he related a very curious scene of dismissal he had the day before gone through; protesting his astonishment at its being presumed that he had ever paid more than the most common attentions to Miss Jennings. Miss Hartley added, that while in the midst of this recital, the heroine of the tale, with her mother, entered the room, having taken their morning's ride thither on purpose

purpose to relate to her the incidents of the preceding day. Finding the gentleman there, their anger knew no bounds; and though innocent, even in thought, of supplanting her companion, she was considered by herself and mother as the sole cause of the lover's inconstancy.

This unjust accusation occasioned her to declare, in the most solemn manner, that she would never receive a visit from Captain Rooke; and though she should lose their friendship in consequence of what had passed, her resolution should be invariably adhered to. Notwithstanding this assurance, the ladies persisting in their accusation, the scene became somewhat comic; reminding her of that in the *Beggars Opera*, excepting that *she* laid no claim to the hero; nor did *he* seem disposed to content himself with *either*, though t'other *dear charmer* had been away; appearing rather petrified at what was passing before him.

She assured me, that till their accidental meeting the preceding evening, she had not exchanged a word with Captain
Rooke

Rooke since this memorable morning, save one night at Ranelagh, when he left his party to join her's; and while chatting together, she saw they were observed by a lady in habits of intimacy with Miss Jennings, to whom, no doubt, the circumstance was reported; and it would be supposed that she had contrived to apprise the gentleman of her intending to join the gay throng on that evening, that they might enjoy each other's society.

After this account of herself, she hoped I should acquit her of caprice in refusing to see him in my house: casual rencontres could not be guarded against; neither was her promise sufficiently binding to lead her to absent herself from those amusements where it was likely they would meet, now that chance had fixed him for some months so near her place of residence.

You may believe I should have found it difficult to affix any blame on either of the parties, unless it were the mother and daughter, who, by the folly of their own conduct, had been so severely punished.

I could

I could not help thinking, that had the good lady been disposed to shew off my ward to advantage, it was hardly possible for her to have adopted any mode of conduct so likely to accomplish the purpose as that already related.

I considered the circumstance of the regiment to which the captain belonged, being ordered into the same county where his mistress (for such I deemed Miss Hartley to be) resided, as an auspicious omen ; and I flattered myself I should have the pleasure of seeing my fair friend worthily bestowed ; though, for her sake, I determined to be very minute in my inquiries respecting the morals of her lover, as I perceived his manners were too insinuating, and his language too persuasive, to be long listened to by a young woman without danger.

A private dance at the house of a neighbour brought us again in the captain's way ; who, after paying his compliments to Miss Hartley, asked her to solicit my permission for his dancing with my eldest daughter.

daughter. This request was readily granted, though I could not help being amused by the policy which dictated it.

The next day, when Mr. Rooke called to inquire after the health of his fair partners, his not being admitted occasioned no remark from Clara or her sister, both of them knowing my aversion to forenoon visitors.

A few days after I was not a little surprised at seeing the carriage of Colonel Rooke at my door. I had given general orders to be denied to every one who called, excepting a gentleman whom I expected on business relative to Clarmont. Miss Hartley not being in the habit of receiving visitors, the porter neglected to ask if she was included; so that, when Colonel Rooke's servant inquired if she was at home, he answered rather confusedly, the ladies were gone out. Mrs. Rooke's card I sent Miss Hartley, who came to me, rejoicing that the lady had not been *let in*.

I made no comment on the business; only, a few days after, I said she might
have

have the carriage that morning, to return the visit. She coloured excessively at the proposal; begged to know if it was necessary to go so soon. I observed, that the earlier a compliment of that kind was returned, the better; and if she wished to avoid the awkwardness of meeting the lady while not introduced, she might go at the time the men were drawn out upon the parade; as I understood the colonel's lady was expected to be present that day. She thanked me for my consideration, promising to follow my advice, not only in what related to that family, but on every occasion; knowing the superiority of my judgment, and, at the same time, being fully sensible of the kind interest I took in her welfare.

Soon after there came a formal invitation to dinner from Colonel and Mrs. **Rooke**; which Miss Hartley begged leave to decline. In a few days Colonel **Rooke** left his card at my door for her.

About this time I received a letter from a relation of her father's, intimating that he should take the liberty of calling at my
house

house on the Sunday following, in order to pay his compliments to me, and to inquire after the health of his cousin, whom he had not heard of since Mr. Austen's departure. In an hour after the receipt of this, came a card, inviting her to dine at the colonel's on the very day fixed by Mr. Filmer for his visit. I told her, that to reject such civilities would be rude in the extreme; and as she had dreaded the formality of a set dinner, she might decline that part of the invitation, assigning, as a reason for doing so, the expectation of seeing Mr. Filmer, and that she would wait upon Mrs. Rooke to tea. On her entreating me to write the note for her, I complied, though I gave but little credit to her fear of inability to express her sentiments on paper, when I had so frequently witnessed her command of words in argument.

Mr. Filmer came, appeared much interested in the happiness of his young friend, and sincerely rejoiced to see her state of health so much amended; for while at Kensington, she had been threatened with

consumptive complaints, which he believed in a great measure to proceed from her leading too sedentary a life, and indulging in late hours in the morning; a practice which the regularity of my family prevented her from continuing. Her improved appearance, he said, was a sufficient proof of my kindness; for himself, as well as others of her friends, had believed her too indolent to get the better of fixed habits, though they had taken some pains to convince her that her illness proceeded from them.

As I could not prevail on this gentleman to remain all night, I requested him to escort his cousin to the colonel's, conceiving that her being attended there by a relation would enhance her consequence in the eyes of those of the family to whom she was yet a stranger. By this means the gentleman was furnished with an opportunity of communicating to his relation what he knew of her brother's movements, who, I understood, had left the ship he belonged to, and was obliged to hide himself from a certain description of people called

Bailiffs

Bailiffs followers, whom for many years he had been too well acquainted with.

* * * * *

From this time Colonel Rooke's family appeared to consider Miss Hartley as one of themselves. Whenever she dined there, the carriage was sent in due form for her; and the captain of course protected her home in the evening. Still he never became her visitor in my house; and as I had not waited upon his sister-in-law, on her first arrival, we were merely public-place acquaintance. Had it not been for the detail I received from Miss Hartley, I should certainly have paid Mrs. Rooke this compliment, on whose account I wished rather to be distantly civil, in order to judge whether her modest merit would attract their notice, independently of being a member of my family; which, had we visited, I could not so readily have ascertained.

The proofs I have already mentioned sufficed to convince me, that Captain Rooke's family were not ignorant of his attachment, and that they also approved

of the object who excited it. I had only one objection to her being so much at their house, which was, that she met people there out of my circle, whom she described as being amiable, and desirous of cultivating an intimacy with her, which, circumstanced as she was, in every instance but one, she had thought expedient to decline.

The lady she selected was a plain little woman near forty, the last that I should have imagined would have had the power of attracting my young friend; who, however, accounted for it, in some degree, by saying, that on her first visit to the colonel's, this lady was of the party, and shewed her such uncommon attention, seeming to feel for her embarrassment, that she could not avoid testifying her gratitude, by accepting the friendship so generously offered by Miss Snelcroft.

CHAP. XX.

" Virtue doth man to virtuous actions steer ;
 " 'Tis not enough that he should vice forbear ;
 " We live not only for ourselves to care ;
 " While they that want it are deny'd their share .

" Nor are those succours to one sort confin'd ,
 " But several parts to several men consign'd :
 " He that of his own stores no part can give ,
 " May with his counsel or his hands relieve . "

SIR JOHN COOPER.

AT this period I received a visit from Dr. Belton. Rejoicing, as I sincerely did, at seeing my old acquaintance look well and happy, the first sight could not fail of recalling to my mind a fatal event, the knowledge of which had been communicated by him the last time we met:

You will believe I avoided every subject that could lead to the dreaded one, inquiring for his mother, sisters, and other of my Lancashire acquaintance, fearing even to notice his second trip to the continent, though I knew he had been some time travelling through France and Flanders,

ders, and, after spending the winter at Paris, had now returned, to settle in his profession.

At last, maugre all my efforts, he touched upon the tender string. "That packet, madam, which was consigned to my care by"—"Which I have never opened," replied I quickly. "Is it possible?" he exclaimed. "I durst not, while Mr. Wentworth's wife, trust myself with a perusal of the contents; and since I have lost him, my mind has been too much occupied by real business to leave room for indulging in unavailing regrets."—"Do you then mean to keep it ever by you in the same state?"—"I know not: some other time perhaps I may answer that question."

The entrance of Miss Hartley and my daughters, whom I had sent for, put a stop to this conversation, which, on my part, was becoming truly painful.

The doctor, as well as myself, appeared evidently embarrassed. He, however, paid his compliments to the ladies with the ease of a polished gentleman. I congratulated him on having arrived at a time
when

when he could see all the *belles* of the county, excepting those who had forsaken us for the pleasures of London, the tragedy of *Douglas* being that evening to be represented by the officers of the regiment; a novelty that could not fail of attracting the ladies in particular.

Miss Hartley then related the names of the gentlemen who were to perform the different characters: Captain Rooke had taken the part of *Glenalvon*, the colonel that of *Lord Randolph*, and a fine youth, who had not been long in the army, named Campbell, had, from his prepossessing figure and manner, that of *Young Norval* assigned him: his friends, however, feared he might be intimidated at sight of the audience, though in rehearsal he had exceeded their most sanguine expectations.

Belton caught at the name of Campbell, asked what part of Scotland he came from, and the title of the family estate. To all these inquiries Miss Hartley had ready answers. Belton then exclaimed, "I will pawn my honour that he succeeds in what-

ever he may undertake. He was at the university the last year I passed at Edinburgh, when I was a frequent witness to his application. What pity it is such a young man should be thrown away upon the army, begging the ladies pardon, (said he, bowing) who, I believe, are in general partial to a red coat! He has often told me he feared a commission and his sword would be his patrimony, though his inclinations would have led him to embrace a learned profession; and, had his father lived, he hoped to have been indulged.

“ If I were not apprehensive that the sight of his old friend might derange his ideas for the evening, I would this moment seek him out. If, however, madam, you will allow me the honour of attending you to the place of performance, I shall have the pleasure of introducing the young hero to you; not doubting to see him crowned with laurels from the hands of the fair.

I observed Miss Hartley looked with infinite scorn on the disciple of Galen, while he manifested his contempt for the army, in conceiving it a pity that a youth
of

of talents should from necessity have been compelled to enter it.

To the great joy of the young ladies, we arrived, about six o'clock, at the principal inn in a neighbouring town, the assembly-room having been converted into a temporary theatre; and, to do justice to those who conducted the entertainments of the evening, all was well arranged, and the characters dressed with the utmost propriety.

The performance, with a very few exceptions, would not have discredited a London theatre. *Lady Randolph* was the worst represented: none of the gentlemen liking to appear in masquerade, an itinerant female performer had been procured, who appeared to every disadvantage, when surrounded by people so very superior to the set of beings with whom she was accustomed to tread the stage. Neither did the gentleman who performed the part of *Old Norval* acquit himself so well as his young namesake, he having, by his mode of delivery, &c. fully verified the prediction of Dr. Belton, who sought him

behind the scenes as soon as the curtain dropped ; and, while yet in his Scottish garb, brought him forward to receive our tribute of praise for the exquisite entertainment he had afforded us.

I omitted to state the very laudable motive which had inspired these gentlemen with a desire to wear the buskin.

A dreadful fire had happened in the course of the winter, which reduced a small village, not very distant from the barracks of the soldiers, to a heap of ruins. The poor inhabitants being uninsured, were, by this unlooked-for misfortune, brought to beggary ; many of them having large families, at that inclement season deprived even of shelter from the severe frost and the snow, which that year was very heavy. Some of the women and children had been received into the barracks ; and by this means the officers became more accurately informed of their little tales of woe than they might otherwise have been. Subscriptions were raised for their present support ; but to clothe such a number, and create a permanent fund,

so

so as to enable them to look forward, with any degree of probability, to the prospect of seeing their habitations erected on a spot which was now a desert waste, required some consideration; many having declared their resolution of embarking for America.

The major of the regiment, who had served there during the war, and who felt the true *amor patriæ*, lamenting this circumstance in the bitterest terms, related the expedients which his brother officers at St. Augustine had fallen upon, for assisting the families of the poor loyalists who had been driven thither, at the dereliction of Charlestown by the British troops: among the number was this, of turning tragedians in the cause of humanity, the profits arising from the performance being appropriated to the relief of these unhappy people. "I," said he, "who could never recite ten lines in my life, took my part; for I became one of the mutes attending on the sultan, in the tragedy of Zara."

This hint was no sooner given, than the officers set about consulting with each other on the possibility of following so bright an example. Some time elapsed before the play could be determined on; and when that point was settled, the arrangement of parts was the next difficulty, none being found desirous of taking that of *Old Norval*.

A gentleman, however, consented to be a volunteer under their banner, rather than so good an intention should be frustrated; though he declared himself ready to relinquish his claim to applause, should any other person offer to enter the lists. The motives by which he was actuated, should have shielded him from the shafts of criticism; but as it is so much easier to spy defects in the work of an author, than to compose a better; so in this instance it gave less trouble to discover that Nature never intended Captain Lawson for an actor, than to find another possessed of equal good-nature, with superior abilities.

The receipts of the night were so great, (many having given gold tickets) that the gentle-

gentlemen voluntarily offered to play another night ; planning it so, that families at a greater distance might be induced to attend. They were farther led to make this proposal, by having received an intimation from a lady of some respectability in the theatrical line, that had she been earlier apprised of their intentions, she would have taken a journey on purpose to perform her favorite part of Lady Randolph.

I had invited Mr. Campbell to dine with me the following day, not only as I thought it a proper compliment to Dr. Belton, but because it ever was my wish to bring into notice young men of the description he appeared to be. Miss Hartley was engaged at the colonel's ; which circumstance occasioned no regret to Dr. Belton.

The entertainment of the preceding evening, you will believe, formed a great part of our conversation ; and I was concerned to hear, that Captain Lawson had declined acting any more, though if no other person was willing to represent the character he had played, he promised to read it ; *but as an actor* he was determined
never

never to tread the stage again. Mr. Campbell forbore to say what had occasioned this resolution: I could however easily perceive, it must have been taken in consequence of the remarks of some of those *pert little things* who are the pests of civilised society.

“And what do you think the youth has been proposing to me, madam,” said Belton? “Really, sir, I cannot pretend to divine!”—“Nothing less than that I should become his reputed fire, and contribute my quota to the benevolent cause in which he is engaged.”—“And why not, my good friend, if you can spare so much of your time as is necessary between this and the next representation?”—“Will you promise to become my *Lady Randolph* while I am rehearsing the part?”—“Certainly,” replied I, laughingly. He then dropped on one knee, and with the tremulous voice of an old man, began:—“Heaven bless that countenance, so sweet and mild,” &c. astonishing my girls, who till now had never seen me in the habits of intimacy with any man except Mr. Austen.

From

From the specimen we received, it appeared Mr. Campbell was perfectly right in recommending this part to his friend. He had when at Edinburgh often heard him recite passages from Shakespeare, and other authors; knowing also his predilection for this play of Mr. Home's, he entertained no doubt of his success, particularly as he had (though in private) pointed out where Captain Lawson principally erred; which was in not having a proper idea of the extreme deference and respect with which a person, situated as Old Norval was, would look up to such a being as Lady Randolph must appear in his eyes. "In short," added Campbell, "one must be born a Scotsman, fully to comprehend the veneration which the adherents of the ancient families of Scotland entertain for their lords and ladies;—a relic of the feudal system hardly known among their southern neighbours."

Miss Hartley came home early, when my girls eagerly related the occurrences of the afternoon; saying, that the next performance of the play would be without

out a fault, Dr. Belton having consented to take the part of Old Norval, which he appeared to be already master of.

“ You forget, my dear Miss Wentworth,” answered he gaily, “ that I have not bargained for acquitting myself in the same manner when I lose my Lady Randolph.” Miss Hartley seemed dying with impatience to hear the whole story: a serious look which I assumed checked the torrent of words ready to flow from her tongue. Expecting no relief while she remained in the parlour, she begged leave to retire, pleading a head-ach as an excuse; the significant looks she had given, being perfectly understood by her companions, they soon followed to give the wished-for information.

CHAP. XXI. 6

*"Il est plus boteux de se defier de ses amis, que a'en eire
trompe."*
ROCHEFOUCAULT.

BEING thus freed from the whole party, Dr. Belton and I were left *tête-a-tête*, at which he seemed not a little elated.

"Will you pardon me, my dear madam," said he, drawing his chair near to the fire, (as if beginning to spend the evening comfortably,) "for asking why you have chosen Miss Hartley to be the inmate of your house, and the companion of the Miss Wentworths?"—"Assuredly, Sir; although the question surprises me not a little."

I then briefly related Mr. Austen's connection with her father, and the reasons already assigned for her becoming a member of my household; adding, "that I had hitherto had every reason to be pleased with her conduct, and trusted I should
have

have no cause to alter my opinion.”—“ I hope so too; though I own from a survey of her features, I am not disposed to give her credit for all the good qualities you say she possesses.”—“ I perceive by your language you have become a physiognomist: take care, my good friend, that you do not study *Lavater* till you fritter away the enjoyments within your reach, and in order to display your skill, make yourself an object of dislike, where you might conciliate regard.”—“ Can you, my dear madam,” exclaimed he, with some warmth, “ believe me so weak? My motives for declaring my sentiments thus freely respecting this young lady were of the purest kind. You have silenced me: be assured whatever talents I may possess for discerning the qualities of the heart and mind, by a strict examination of the countenance, they shall never be exerted to the detriment of any human being, unless I conceived much evil would ensue to an unsuspecting character, whom I called my friend, which might be prevented

vented by a disclosure. I however shall never pretend to oppose *vague conjecture* to *certain experience*."

The night candles being brought in at this moment, I desired the servant to shew the gentleman to his chamber, retiring to mine with my tranquillity rather disturbed by this young man, who certainly appeared in a different character to that in which I had been accustomed to view him. This wealth is a dangerous thing thought I; it converts *bashful timidity* into *modest assurance*. I had not been altogether pleased with the theatrical essay of the afternoon; though as to Lady Randolph and the speech recited, there was not a word that could be construed into the address of a lover to his mistress; yet in the expression of his eyes when they met mine, there was something nearly resembling it: besides, in the presence of the young stranger and my daughters, in my idea there appeared a flippancy rather inconsistent with my general conduct, submitting for a moment to be considered in the light of an actress. From so cursory a view to pretend

tend to be better acquainted with Miss Hartley's propensities than myself, who had such ample opportunities for studying them, seemed as if the gentleman was disposed to arrogate a superiority in judgment, to which his years by no means entitled him. These reflections determined me to be more reserved in my manner when we met than I had hitherto been; and, if possible, in his presence to be more kind than usual to my ward.

At breakfast the subject of the play was again revived. I gave Miss Hartley an opening, that she might descant on its merits, and that of the performers; which she did in so judicious a manner, that I exulted in my own mind at the mortification of her aspersor: my triumph was, however, soon converted into pity; for on looking towards Belton, I found his air so dejected, so truly *abattu*, I was compelled to pay him some attention, lest the change should excite observation.

At the sound of my voice his eye brightened; his whole frame seemed renovated; he became assiduous to please even Miss Hartly, by way of testifying his gratitude
for

for my endeavouring to forget he had displeased me. In short, I was soon convinced that little as I thought of the sex, I had inspired a serious attachment where I should least have expected it. I was, it is true, not past the age when women of any pretensions to beauty expect the homage of men; but having, since the loss of the only two objects who were capable of inspiring affection, preserved a happy indifference for the sex, I was less likely than others to imagine their regard for me proceeded from any other source than friendship: in one younger than myself I should not have supposed the passion of love easily excited. In this instance, however, the capricious deity chose not to be confined by common rules.

Giving my guest very civil hints, that now he had found his old college companion, I should no longer think it incumbent on me to furnish entertainment for him in my house till the hour of dinner; I therefore resumed my former morning occupations, the young ladies retiring to theirs at the same time I did to mine. An
assembly

assembly taking place the following evening, the doctor of course escorted us thither, and danced with Clara, though he seemed but little at home at the meeting. I had the next day a party in my own house to dinner; and endeavoured by every means in my power to pay him general attentions, without resuming those confidential conversations, which, in former times, we had been in the habit of holding.

* * * * *

On the night fixed for the second representation of *Douglas*, we repaired, according to appointment, to the theatre; where, after the company were assembled, previous to the drawing up of the curtain, we were agreeably surprised by the entrance of *Young Norval*, who spoke a poetical address, written by himself; thanking the audience for their former lenity to him, bespeaking their indulgence to his unfledged muse, which had been invoked on this occasion, in order to give confidence to a friend, who for the first time wore the buskin, to which he had been induced from having, in his professional capacity,

capacity, witnessed the sufferings of those who, by *their bounty*, were now taught to prize an existence, which before had no charms for them. The plaudits were universal: as none but *our set* knew who the new *Norval* was, their expectations were kept on tip-toe till the third act, when he made his *entré*.

The lady who had before offered to play the heroine now evinced her sincerity. She came from London purposely to join them; which tended to keep up an interest that her predecessor in the part failed to excite. Belton's being, in some degree, the novelty of the evening, was, without doubt, one cause of the approbation with which he was crowned; though I must confess, I do not recollect to have seen the character so well represented at either of the winter theatres. Few of the audience could be induced to believe him so young a man as we described him to be; and when he joined us at the end of the performance, overpowered him with thanks for the entertainment he had afforded them.

As

As a compliment to the officers who had exerted themselves so successfully for the children of affliction, a supper had been ordered by the gentlemen of the neighbourhood; and the band of music that had played between the acts, being in the house, a dance was struck up, to the no small satisfaction of the young people, who enjoy an unexpected amusement of this kind much more than a regular ball. Dr. Belton excused himself from joining in more than one dance, for the purpose, as it appeared, of conversing with me, in order to inform me that he intended setting out for the metropolis the next day, where he had resolved for the future to fix his permanent residence.

“You once, madam,” said he, sighing, “deigned to take a lively interest in my establishment; and I flattered myself, in paying a visit to Merton Place, to have benefited by your good counsel: but you have lost (for me at least) that active benevolence which used to be the predominant feature in your character.”—“A commerce with the world, as a woman of business,

business, Mr. Belton, soon blunts our feelings, and teaches us to concentrate to one point those exertions which were frequently called forth for others. However, be assured, if you stood in need of my advice or assistance, in any shape whatever, you would soon find me as zealous as before I experienced the coldness of casual connexion.”—“Never did I need it more. Teach me how to support your contempt, and the separation that is so soon to take place, without my having the power of convincing you that I do not deserve it.”

At that instant Miss Hartley and Captain Rooke joined us, requesting to know whether I would permit my daughters and herself to begin another dance, as the hour I had fixed for leaving the company was near at hand. Fearing they might take cold in going out of the heated room, if again put in motion, I requested them to be in readiness to depart, giving my hand to Dr. Belton, desiring Miss Hartley to lead us to the spot where my girls were. This mark of condescension served to dispel the gloom which overhung the

young man's brow, and, in a great measure, induced him to forgive Miss Hartley, who certainly had left the dancers from no other motive than a desire to interrupt our conversation; bearing in mind, as she doubtless did, the gentleman's gallantry to me on former occasions. On joining my daughters I found them little desirous of prolonging their stay; and being much fatigued, we soon departed for Merton Place.

On my entrance into the breakfast-parlour, in the morning, I found it occupied by Dr. Belton, the girls not having made their appearance, as usual, owing to the late hours of the preceding night.

I accosted him more familiarly than I had done since the night of my quitting him so abruptly, requesting to know if he could be prevailed upon to give us another day, unless he had an appointment on business which demanded immediate attention.

“Do you believe, my dear madam, that any prospect of advantage could make
me

me relinquish your society, if I did not conceive, that by doing so, I should free you from the painful task of shewing civility to one whom you no longer esteem?"

"Why should you judge so unfavourably of your own merit, Mr. Belton? Believe me I shall never cease to regard you, and shall sincerely rejoice at having the power of promoting your happiness:—*friends* we have *ever* been; if we do not continue so it must be *your* fault, not *mine*."

—"Let us remain so then," he eagerly replied; "more I will not ask: suffer me, at least, to depart with this pledge of your forgiveness," taking my hand, which he carried to his lips.

"May I be indulged with the assurance that a written account of my proceedings on entering the capital will not excite displeasure."

"On the contrary, I shall consider it as an additional surety for the duration of our friendship."

"You will answer me, perhaps?"

"Give me a specimen of your talents as a correspondent," said I, "before you

think of fettering me by a promise of that kind. I assure you I shall expect a great deal of entertainment from you; for mere letters of business I receive so often that I am almost tired of putting pen to paper to answer them. You must furnish me with literary intelligence: in short, I know not what demands I may make upon your good nature. If you comply with them, I must transmit my thanks—if you do not, why, I shall be tempted to scold you; so, at any rate, you run a risk of paying postage for a sheet from me: however, let me pour out your chocolate, lest the chaise should come before you have breakfasted.” He gazed at me with that silent kind of admiration, while speaking the last sentence, that he hardly perceived the groupe of females who then entered the room, till their salutation of “good morning” awakened him from his reverie, and compelled him to an exertion of politeness that had nearly made him upset the tea-urn, which was placed near the part of the table upon which he was leaning.

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The ladies had the conversation to themselves, neither of us being disposed to interrupt their volubility. The arrival of the expected carriage, and the entrance of Mr. Campbell, roused us both. I found the young lieutenant had obtained permission to accompany his friend to the capital, and that he anticipated no small degree of pleasure from the journey, expecting to meet his mother and sisters there, one of the latter having lately married a nabob from the east, and had repaired to that mart of pleasure and gaiety for the first time in her life, eager to display her jewels and her fine equipage; which were all she obtained in return for wedding a debilitated being, who, confiding in the *weight of his purse*, had ventured to lay siege to one of the beauties of the "north country," whose mother *urged her fair, and her Jamie at the sea*, in order to drown reflection, was now likely to become a compleat *modern wife*.

The tear seemed ready to start in the young man's eye while he talked of this sister. "Had I been in Argyleshire at

the time," added he, "this marriage could not have taken place. I go to congratulate her, 'tis true, and to be introduced to my brother-in-law; but I also shall explain to my dear Matilda the line of conduct it is now incumbent on her to pursue. Her lover was my intimate friend; therefore from me she will doubtless expect a severe reproof for her inconstancy. In this she will be mistaken; recriminations are always useless, and only tend to irritate the feelings of the party to whom they are directed—To a wound but just closed should we apply a corrosive? rather shall I undertake to acquaint my friend with the cruel combination of circumstances that led to the necessity of this sacrifice. "Ah! Mrs. Wentworth," he exclaimed, "why are not all mothers like you? their children might then be happy: a love of dissipation, and a taste for profusion, have been the rocks on which mine has wrecked her happiness; my father's estate might otherwise have been unincumbered, and my *sisters*—I must say no more. I know that you are

too generous to take advantage of what I have uttered. Were you to become acquainted with my mother, you would feel inclined to forget her failings, when you perceived them to proceed from a mistaken notion that she would contribute to the comforts of her family by those very actions that have involved them in ruin."

This interesting communication from the young Caledonian took place while he rambled with me to view some improvements I had lately made in my grounds. The two friends soon took their leave; the elder one doubting whether he had lost footing or gained a step in my favour during this short stay in my family.

CHAP. XXII.

“ But who is she, the gen’ral gaze
“ Of sighing crowds, the world’s amaze,
“ Who looks forth as the blushing morn
“ On mountains of the east new-born,
“ Is it not Matilda fair ?”

HAMILTON.

As the spring advanced, I felt more feverely the loss of Alicia, who had been my constant companion in my rambles among my poorer neighbours.

Clara pursued her music with uncommon diligence; and Emily studied the sister art, painting, with great success, drawing and colouring flowers from Nature with exquisite delicacy. Miss Hartley continued to give them both instructions on the harpsichord, while Emily, in return, undertook to communicate to her some hints respecting her favourite art, that lady having been taught drawing at school, but had paid little attention to it for some years. Seeing them thus employed, I had little inclination to break in
upon

upon the trio; consequently during the mornings, they were left in full possession of their time.

Not long after the departure of Mr. Campbell, the regiment was removed into another county, with some probability of their being ordered to the West Indies. For the first time I began to view Miss Hartley in less amiable colours than I had hitherto done. The little concern she expressed at parting from her friends the Rookes, with whom she had, for so long a time, lived in habits of intimacy, seemed to me rather unnatural.

If she really felt attached to the young man who had been the means of procuring her the notice of his family, reserve on this subject was commendable; yet her manner must have discovered the state of her mind in spite of all her efforts to conceal it. On the contrary, the day the officers took their leave, she appeared in the same state of health and spirits as usual; wore at table no air of *disfrail*, though it was that on which she usually dined at the colonel's; and when Emily, in the full-

ness of her heart, hoped it was not true that they were likely to be sent abroad, Miss Hartley still was apathy itself.

“As it is not now the season of war, my dear,” replied I, “*we*, who are unconnected with the gentlemen, have little to regret on their account, being, at all events, deprived of the pleasure of their society; their families will likewise suffer less at the idea of a separation, there being little risk but from the climate, and that to temperate people is trifling; yet where the heart is interested danger is magnified; and I think the wife of a sailor or soldier (unless a family of children ties her to one spot) ought to take up her knapsack and follow her husband the world over, where her presence is not likely to enervate him, which in time of peace is not probable: on the contrary, their being together might confirm good habits, and tend to destroy pernicious ones, if any such had been contracted.”

While delivering these sentiments I watched Miss Hartley: in vain did I seek in her charming countenance for the glow
of

of sensibility, and the modest approbation which I believed would have been lurking there, fearing to display itself in words; all was close, the eye as guarded as the tongue. I was softened, so were my daughters; they *recollected*, or at least *fancied* that they did, the day on which their father and myself quitted Clarmont for London;—I was obliged to retire to my closet to give vent to those effusions of the soul which their presence restrained.

* * * * *

In reflecting on Miss Hartley's behaviour I traced a degree of art that seemed altogether incompatible with the native simplicity and extreme diffidence of her own abilities, which at first view appeared to be the striking features of her character.

Her refusing to see Captain Rooke in my house, that she might adhere to a promise made to people with whom she no longer held any communication, and who certainly, if her statement of matters was just, had no claim upon her gratitude, was truly ridiculous. In a girl of

eighteen, full of romantic notions of friendship, so punctilious an observance of her own declarations might not appear inconsistent : but this lady of twenty-five was certainly influenced by other motives : her unwillingness to accept the civility of her lover's family might be traced to a desire of enhancing her consequence in their eyes ; this also most likely governed her in the first instance. There were yet other reasons why she wished to keep the gentleman from my house—*my* daughters might rival *her* in *his* attentions, as *she* had done *her* friend : besides, if that intercourse between the families had taken place, which would naturally have followed my waiting upon Mrs. Rooke, all her superiority of intelligence would have been done away. In the way she managed matters, Clara and Emily most eagerly anticipated her return from the colonel's ; and reckoned on the stores of amusement she would procure there, as a certain relief to the still life which reigned at home.

Though I little imagined I was harbouring a coquette, I had good reason to believe

believe Miss Hartley to be a finished one; and that I was most terribly in her way in engrossing Dr. Belton's attentions. Untouched as her heart was, still to become a member of so respectable a family as Colonel Rooke's, with the approbation of all parties, was a point of considerable importance, and no means were to be left untried that could accelerate it. The frigidity which at times she displayed to her lover might convince him of her indifference, and possibly damp his ardour; along with his thus experiencing her insensibility, had her charms made any impression on Dr. Belton, a man perfectly independent in fortune, and to be considered a desirable match for any young woman not otherwise engaged, there would have been a powerful stimulative for the friends of Captain Rooke to come forward and declare in explicit terms what their intentions were. While there appeared no rival it was likely the family would quit the neighbourhood, leaving her in the same uncertainty she was when they entered it: whatever her lover's wishes might be, she
well

well knew he could make no proposal of himself, his success in life depending, in a great measure, on his securing the protection and countenance of his brother. Much as the colonel and his wife appeared to admire Miss Hartley, she had too thorough a knowledge of human nature not to be convinced that many of her attractions arose from the respectable situation in which she was placed; and that her being in the style she was in my family, gave a degree of credibility to the report of her fortune; some good-natured friend having said, that from her brother's misconduct, her father had cut him off with a slender annuity, leaving her heiress of all his possessions.

This insight into Miss Hartley's character was not acquired in the retiring into my closet to indulge my meditations; nor do I know that it is rightly placed in this part of my narrative; for not till some months after did I penetrate the veil, with which she had the dexterity to shroud herself.

The

The next morning's post brought the following letter from Dr. Belton: -

" Dare I presume to hope that the permission granted by you, my inestimable and long-adored monitress, was not extorted or given merely to rid yourself of importunity? So delightful, however, do I consider the privilege of addressing you by the title of *friend* and *correspondent*, that I will no longer seek to penetrate into the motives which prompted you to allow it.

" Our journey to the metropolis had no incident to adorn it; yet we were both such *agreeable post-chaise companions* as not to find it necessary to have recourse to any expedients, such as counting mile-stones, &c. for beguiling the time. On our arrival in Jermyn-street, where I have taken up my residence for the present year, I found, along with the cards of Mrs. Campbell and her daughters, who had called that morning in the hope of meeting Campbell, an invitation to dine *en famille* with their brother the following day at the house of Mr. Malcolm in Harley-street. My fellow-traveller

traveller was eager to embrace his family; he therefore bent his way thither, carrying along with him my assent to the requested meeting of the following day. As you have been in some degree introduced to the personages which compose our young soldier's family, I presume, my dear madam, a farther account of them will not be displeasing, particularly as I have not yet been able to procure any literary intelligence superior to that which the periodical publications furnish, and which I know are regularly transmitted to you.

“Until the next morning at breakfast my companion and I hardly exchanged ten words. I then asked if he had been presented to his new relation.—“Yes;” after a long pause, “I have.”—“And what think you of him?”—“Very little: I am absorbed by other considerations. When you see his wife, you will say Matilda merited a better fate; she is lovely beyond my expectations: the two years I have been absent from her has improved her beauty wonderfully. But alas! she is so infected by the company she keeps; talks

of *playing high, operas, concerts, and balls*, with all the volubility of one who had never known another scene; while my mother, who should stem this torrent, assists her in finding new objects for squandering away the immense sums with which the prodigality of Mr. Malcolm furnishes her. Her heart, however, is yet uncontaminated: she shed bitter tears when she first pressed me to her bosom, and I believe exerted herself in conversation to check those recollections which the sight of me had awakened: she appeared pleased at the idea of your being an attendant on her parties. In reply to this I said, that though a young man, you were very select in the choice of your associates; and her's, if I might judge from her language, were not the most desirable ones.

“ If he is your friend, Herbert,” said she, with energy, “ he will, on that very account, become my constant visitor: I am surrounded by parasites and flatterers; *he* might dare to use the language of sincerity.” I grasped her hand, to shew that I felt for her all that a brother ought, and
that

that I wished it were in my own power to assume the office of monitor, so dangerous in the hands of any other person, save one of her own sex.—“After this day, tell me if you do not shrink from the task imposed; remember, if you do not, you must emulate the example of Scipio, for the danger is nearly equal, and you have not his resource in flight.”—I assured him I was fortified by the sentiments I entertained for one of the first women; and that I should have great pleasure in contributing to the happiness of his sister by my advice, or any other exertion of friendship within the compass of my ability to offer.

“On our arrival in Harley Street, we were ushered into the room where Mrs. and Miss Campbell were ready to receive us. The senior lady has still the appearance of a fine woman: her daughter is both amiable and sensible; or her countenance is a truant (forgive my presumption, after the severe rebuff I received from you); she is also handsome, but inclined to the penseroso. After a little time Mrs. Malcolm made her entrée; grace, vivacity,

vivacity, and loveliness, in every feature and motion. Much as her brother had praised her beauty, I was awed by contemplating it ; nor did I any longer hesitate in joining with him, for her own sake, in a wish to preserve her, if possible, from the vortex of vice and folly, into which it was likely, from concurring causes, the gay and dissipated of both sexes would delight to plunge her. There was, notwithstanding her gay, disengaged manner, a correctness in her look and conversation that repressed the least approach to familiarity: this superiority would be acknowledged by those who possessed it not themselves with no other sensation than that which Satan felt, as described by Milton—

“ Saw Virtue in its own shape—how lovely !

“ Saw, and pined his loss ;”

yet, with no resolution of seeking to retrieve his former rank among the angels ; but rather a determination to bring others to his own level.

“ Picture to yourself a diminutive, consequential creature, expecting homage from all but men of rank and title, to
whom

whom he pays that tribute he demands from others, and you will have formed some idea of the husband of Mrs. Malcolm.

“ At dinner our party was not enlarged; the conversation was spirited and lively on the part of our hostess, who did the honors of the table with an ease peculiar to herself; Mr. Malcolm endeavouring to relax from his usual stateliness, in order to please his wife, by paying attention to her brother and his friend, though in the act he displayed to us very forcibly how much he considered himself our superior. When we withdrew to the drawing room we found the ladies had an addition to their society; though this not being one of Mrs. Malcolm's nights for receiving company, the number of visitors was inconsiderable. Among the groupe was Major Malcolm, a first cousin of the nabob's, who, previous to his marriage, had been considered the presumptive heir to his relation's fortune. Though a good deal mortified, no doubt, by this unexpected event, he appeared to pay uncommon

mon attention to his cousin Matilda. After every other person had taken their leave, this gentleman proposed our adjourning to Ranelagh, which being perfectly agreeable to all parties, we were soon whirled thither. Mrs. Malcolm permitted me to lead her into the rotunda, and then laying her hand upon the arm of her brother, left the major no other resource but to attach himself to Mrs. and Miss Campbell; Mr. Malcolm having declined accompanying us, these ladies would otherwise have been left without a beau.

“ The admiration our fair charge excited amid a crowd of beauties, was a convincing proof that her brother’s fears were not awakened without sufficient cause. *His* resemblance to the family soon declared the right he had to prevent the approach of the idle throng, who waited for an opportunity to address her: who *I was*, whom she honoured so much, could not as easily be ascertained. Politeness requiring that I should pay some attention to the mother of my friend, I resigned my place, which was filled before the major could,

could, with any decency, quit the side of Miss Campbell, with whom, when I joined the trio, he was in deep discourse. We staid but a little while longer, Mrs. Malcolm complaining of fatigue. Putting the ladies under the care of their usual *cecisbio*, the major, we walked to Jermyn-street, enjoying, as we came along, the beauties of a fine May morning, and the haggard looks of the votaries of dissipation, whose countenances peering out of the carriages *en passant*, bore little resemblance to the *human face divine*; the heat and dust of the room having occasioned some of the ladies complexions to take a very different hue from that which the venders of cosmetics promise to the fair purchasers of their wares.

“ I have, since this evening, frequently accompanied the lieutenant to his sister’s; she receives me with the same condescension as at first, requesting me, with the most enchanting *naïveté*, not to forsake her when her brother sets off for Portsmouth; Mr. Malcolm having, by his interest, got him exchanged into another corps

corps now at Gibraltar. In future, therefore, we may salute him by the appellation of Captain; a promotion which, I am confident, all his friends in your vicinity will rejoice to hear of.

“Suffer me, my dear Mrs. Wentworth, to hope that you do not find my details altogether uninteresting, and that I shall shortly have the pleasure of receiving, from your own hands, an assurance of your health. Convinced that the countenance I received from you at an early period of my life has made me what I am, and that without your kind interference my family would still have been struggling with adverse fortune, is it to be wondered at that I should seek to devote the remainder of it to your service. What would I say—that I ever shall be, with unfeigned respect and unceasing regard,

“Your most faithful servant,

“ROBERT BELTON.

Jermyn-street, May 18, 178—.”

I do not doubt, my dear Miss Middleton, your feeling as lively an interest for
the

the fascinating Mrs. Malcolm, as I did on the perusal of Dr. Belton's epistle; many tears has she since drawn from my eyes. You will believe in my answer I exhorted him to continue the course he had begun; but not to place too much reliance on his own strength: I also requested to know the name and designation of the lady's lover, and those distressing circumstances that had induced such a woman to break her engagement, and make a *loveless, joyless* vow.

CHAP. XXIII.

“ The course of true love never did run smooth ;
“ Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
“ War, death, or sickness, did lay siege to it,
“ Making it momentary as a sound.”

SHAKESPEARE.

FROM reflections of this nature I was roused by being told, that a stranger of a rough appearance demanded to see me, refusing to tell his name or business. Following my servant down stairs, I was accosted by the person in the hall, who presented a letter, which he said would explain the nature of his errand, and induce me to grant him a private audience. The signature of James Hartley surprised me. I ran over the contents in a cursory manner, requesting the bearer might be ushered into the library, whither I immediately followed him. I found this ill-fated misguided young man had lain a considerable time in the King's Bench prison, unpitied by his friends, who would rather have raised a subscription to keep him

him there, to prevent any dishonor that might be attached to them by his conduct, than by any exertion of theirs induce his creditors to set him free. He had contrived, however, by his plausibility and apparent openness, to interest one of those benevolent beings, who delight in exploring the haunts of misery, and setting the prison doors open to those who appear desirous of getting their livelihood by honest industry, from which, while inhabitants of such places, they are excluded.

Hartley, by his style of writing, would have made me his friend, if I had not been fortified against his misrepresentations, by a statement of facts I had received from his relation Mr. Filmer, whose visit to Merton Place I formerly mentioned. The purport of his address to me was to request my assistance in raising a sum, which was necessary to be advanced in addition to what had been promised by his new found friend, who had also got him appointed lieutenant of a frigate bound for the West Indies, and who, I imagine, would, with the same kindness, have paid every

every shilling of the composition accepted by those to whom he was indebted, if he had not wished, by this means, to ascertain the estimation in which the young sailor was held by his own connections.

Mr. Austen having the management of his father's affairs, and not being on the spot to give him aid, was the excuse for an application to me; being confident, as Hartley added, that I ran no risk in obliging him, when deserted by those on whom he had strong claims, but whose cruel treatment had almost driven him to despair; for immediately on my assent being given, I should be secured by his order on my son-in-law, for the amount of the pecuniary loan granted, which should be repaid out of the first produce of the estate; and by the fleet then hourly expected, large consignments of indigo and cochineal were known to have been shipped on that account.

I explained to the person who brought the letter, that I had no further connexion with Mr. Hartley's family than merely having his sister on a visit in my house;

that in consequence of the communication I had received, I should write to Mr. Austen, requesting his interference in his behalf; and I had no doubt, that whatever could be done, without injuring the property of Miss Hartley, who was under his immediate care, he would be ready and willing to do; and that, on receiving his orders, I should with pleasure advance whatever sum might by him be deemed requisite; but of myself could not pretend to render him any service, incompetent as I was to decide on the claim he had upon the property left by his father. In the interim, should he, by any other expedient, be liberated, I should be happy to hear further from him, lest reports might be circulated to his disadvantage, and reach the ears of his sister, who, I hoped, would not be made acquainted with his distresses.

“You need not give yourself much trouble about that, madam,” said he; “for to my certain knowledge, Master Hartley has written three letters to his sister within this month, requesting her to
speak

“speak to you: to which she has returned no other answer, than that he must be satisfied till Mr. Austen’s return; for she could not enter into his affairs.”

“And pray, sir, where were these letters addressed?”—“To the care of one Miss. Snelcroft. That was why the young gem’man got me to come down to you, fearing to trust the post; “for who knows,” says he, “but that sister of mine may stop the letter, seeing my hand writing;” and besides, we did not know, ma’am, the place where you lived; only supposed it might be near this same Miss Snelcroft, to whose house her letters were directed.”—

“And was it there you obtained my address?”—“Yes, ma’am; though I did not say who sent me, or where I came from.”

I was sorry I could do no more than give the messenger a trifle for his assiduity and attention to the cause he had undertaken; though you will believe, when I went into the tea room, my ideas of Miss Hartley were very different from those I had formerly entertained.

She looked uncommonly interesting; was

more assiduous to please than ever; yet appeared to be labouring under some dejection of spirits, which she in vain sought to conquer. I was then angry with myself for having, for a moment, believed her capable of acting wrong; imputing to extreme delicacy her not acquainting her brother with my place of residence, as fearing, from past experience, he might be troublesome; which the plan he had adopted for finding me out had shewn to be justly founded.

I went so far back as to accuse myself for having censured her, even in thought, for her guarded behaviour on the departure of the Rookes; believing, that at that time she was so much absorbed by her brother's unhappy situation, which she had not the power of meliorating, as to leave no room for dwelling on other objects.

To a generous mind there is no sensation more truly painful, than that which is occasioned by a conviction of having detracted from a person's merit, when on a minute observation we are compelled to give them praise for those very actions
which

which we had before deemed reprehensible. Miss Hartley, it is true, was not privy to these revolutions in my opinion: I could not, however, help striving to redouble my attentions, by way of expiating, in my own eyes, my offences against her. A second letter from Dr. Belton turned my thoughts into a new channel.

“ You see, my dear madam, how dangerous a thing is approbation. Already am I disposed to obey your commands respecting the private history of the family I am now most intimate with; though probably a month or two hence was as early a period as you had fixed in your own mind for the communication.

“ The bond which unites me to the family of Malcolm is in some measure unknit, by the departure of Captain Campbell, who left us for Gibraltar a few days ago. His sister is as bewitching as ever; and, I flatter myself, not so much a votary of dissipation as when we first met. The blood of Argyle, which flows in her veins, will, I trust, cease to circulate, ere she



she commits any act derogatory of the stock from whence she sprung.

“ Her marriage with Mr. Malcolm was entered into in order to rescue her family from impending ruin. An early attachment you have heard hinted at: the gallant youth who excited it is now ploughing the main,

“ Still in hopes, when danger's o'er,

“ To anchor on his native shore.”

Without his Matilda, all countries will be alike to him, excepting the spot which witnessed their mutual love; consequently that hope will never be realized.

“ This gentleman is a descendant of one of the adherents of the unfortunate House of Stuart, whose possessions were attainted in the rebellion of forty-five, and who lost his life fighting by the side of him whom he believed his rightful sovereign; by that means avoided the block—a fate which would certainly have awaited him, had he been taken alive on the field of battle.

“ The father of our present hero had been long resident in France, when the known clemency of his present majesty prompted

prompted him to return to Scotland, and take a wife from among his own connections, who died soon after the birth of Allan,

“ Mr Montgomery being more a Frenchman than a Scotchman, (his chief means of support arising from a pension from the court of Louis) soon returned to France with his infant son, where he received his education, and continued till fifteen years old; at which time his father dying, his mother's relations sent for him: determining that he should become a true subject of the House of Brunswick, they in his name relinquished the pension, the retaining of which would have incapacitated him from holding a commission in his majesty's service.

“ It so happened, that Herbert Campbell and Allan Montgomery were students at the university at the same time, and that during the vacation, the former invited the latter to pass a month at his father's seat in Argyleshire.

“ When we consider the advantages which young Montgomery possessed above

his contemporaries, from having been bred among our more polished neighbours of the continent, we shall not wonder at the youthful and beauteous Matilda being sensible of his accomplishments, or that he became the slave of so lovely an object.

“ His election being now made for the sea-service in preference to the land, he gave up the study of books for that of men; and, in quitting the hospitable dwelling of Mr. Campbell, plighted his faith to the sister of his friend.

“ His maternal uncle being in the navy, he had been long entered as a midshipman; and in declaring his predilection for the life of a sailor, gratified this relation not a little. He was fortunate in obtaining several opportunities of seeing his mistress previous to sailing for the East Indies, whither his uncle was ordered, and of course carried him in his train.

“ Soon after this separation, the lady's father died; and with this shock there came a train of attendant ills, that threatened the annihilation of his family.

“ Every

“ Every moveable on the estate had long before been converted into cash : this was evident : but none knew that it was mortgaged for more than it was likely to sell for in its present state ; and that all the mother and two daughters had to depend on for subsistence arose from a very slender jointure of the widow’s, with which the mortgage was burthened.

“ At this time they received accounts of the death of the elder brother, then on service in India. Herbert became the heir ; but he also was abroad on duty.

“ The property being advertised for sale by the mortgagee, (who suffered the ladies to remain in the house till it was sold) Mr. Malcolm came to view it ; was struck with the figure and beauty of Matilda, doubly interesting from her sable garments, and the peculiar circumstances of her family ; introduced himself as having known the late Major Campbell in India ; and, in short, by his display of wealth, and promises of protection and friendship to the mother, very soon acquired a powerful advocate with the daughter,

daughter, who, overpowered by his generosity, suffered herself to be led a willing victim to the altar.

“ You already know that Mr. Malcolm held out no false colours : that he has indeed acted nobly by every branch of his wife’s family : and I will venture to affirm, that if this amiable woman had a mother of a different cast, she would feel no sacrifice too great, when she considered it so conducive to a parent’s future happiness in life.

“ As soon as the parliament is prorogued Mr. Malcolm purposes setting out for a seat he has in Berkshire : he has, however, signified to Mrs. and Miss Campbell, that he expects they will then return to the North, (he having promised to keep a liberal establishment for the widow on the family estate) where, in the shooting season, it is probable himself and his wife will join them.

“ The latter is unwilling to part from her sister ; yet she cannot suffer her mother to set out for Scotland unaccompanied. Mrs. Campbell is pining at the mandate,
though

though she dares not remonstrate. Her only cause of sorrow arises from her not having the power of witnessing her daughter's triumph in a new circle; for she feels none of those tender sympathies which would lead her to wish to be near her, in order to assist her in supporting the state, which, as Mr. Malcolm's wife, she must keep up.

“ Miss Campbell has her regrets too upon the occasion; but they also are awakened for herself. The insinuating manners, and silent attentions of the major have made some impression on *her* heart; and the separation from *him* is the circumstance that presses most upon her feelings at present.

“ Thus you see, my dear madam, dearly as the purchase has cost, how little happiness has been diffused through the family by this alliance.

“ Montgomery is shortly expected. I sincerely hope Mrs. Malcolm will have left England, or at least London, before he reaches it. He is now the first lieutenant of his uncle's vessel, and continues

to merit his favour, as well as to receive his countenance.

“ The late act of indemnity respecting the posterity of those who suffered in the cause his grandfather did, expected to be followed by a restoration of their estates, will be of considerable advantage to him. I was present when Mrs. Malcolm cast her eye on the paragraph, stating the rejoicings that had taken place in the Highlands on this occasion. Her countenance brightened: it soon, however, contracted a gloom, which was not dispelled till the tear, which bedewed her cheek, unheeded till it fell, roused her to a sense of her present situation.

“ I tried to draw the major’s attention from her, who appeared to be endeavouring to penetrate the inmost recesses of her soul. This man is to accompany her to the country. Though known to be a professed libertine, his manner to his fair cousin is truly correct; and did I not look deeper than his outward deportment, I should believe the contemplation of such purity had made him a proselyte to virtue.

vittue. "But can the *Æthiopean* change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" *Then* may they also do good that are accustomed to do evil.

"In the hope of soon hearing that you, my dear madam, are freed from all anxieties, save those which the care of your family necessarily give rise to, I am, with sincerity of heart, truly your's, while

"ROBERT BELTON."

London, June 178—.

CHAP. XXIV.

“Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend!
“More hideous, when thou shew’st thee in a child,
“Than the sea-monster.” SHAKESPEARE.

AFTER reading this affecting narrative, how truly did I sympathise with my friend Herbert, in his anxious solicitude for his favourite sister.

Expressions of gratitude to the Almighty for having preserved *me* from such trials as appeared to await this truly excellent daughter, was the first aspiration I breathed. The next, that *my* daughter, though thrown among strangers, was married to the man of her choice; and besides, had the advantage of an affectionate companion and counsellor in the person of her sister.

Letters from both, received at this time, gave me the sincerest satisfaction. Sorry however was I to observe, that Clara and Emily became more reserved in their communications to me than usual; and I thought I perceived in them a jealousy,
when

when I expressed any solicitude for the return of Alicia.

I called myself to an account for having given them just reason to accuse me of partiality to their sisters, or neglect towards them. I found no cause for self-reproach; and for the first time in my life, recollected that I was their *Step-Mother*.

Indignant at the discovery, I felt no desire for attempting to conciliate them, trusting that their own good sense, as well as innocent grateful hearts, would soon prompt them to acknowledge their error; and by redoubled attention and affection, seek to banish from my remembrance the idea that their coldness had given birth to. Fearing to wound the feelings of my absent daughters, I forbore to touch upon the subject, speaking of their sisters with my usual warmth.

Imagining they might find retirement irksome, and not being able to move without me, I made several excursions in the neighbouring country. Still when at home, there was a gloom which pained me to the
soul

soul. I was almost tempted to ask Miss Hartley if she could assist in penetrating into the cause: my dignity of character here stood in the way; and with a heart bursting with grief, arising from what source I knew not, I sat down to answer Belton's second letter, striving to lose the recollection of my own sorrows, by participating in those of others.

The correspondence which ensued at this time, will elucidate this part of my history better than any recital of my own.

“ You did me great injustice, my dear friend, in believing I had so little of the woman in me, as to have quietly submitted to a much longer delay in the gratification which I promised myself, from hearing the history of Mrs. Malcolm before she became a wife. You need not, I flatter myself, any assurance to convince you, that the request was not prompted by idle curiosity.

“ Hunting after scandalous anecdotes with a view of retailing them, I conceive to be so truly derogatory of the female character,

rafter, that I know not an inducement which could lead me to hold converse with any woman guilty of the practice.

“Most sincerely do I wish that Mr. Malcolm’s English estate had been in our county, instead of that of Berks. Is there no way of contriving a meeting?

“Had I been disposed for a London journey, it would have availed but little towards our forming an intimacy. At your request she would have called at my door, most likely when I was from home: I should have done the same at her’s; then received a card of invitation to a ball or card-party a month after: so that during my six weeks residence in the *beau monde*, we might have exchanged civilities of this kind, become very *dear friends*, without caring whether either party saw each other again as long as they lived.

“Is it to be wondered at, that a woman of sensibility pines in the midst of such an unmeaning round? Her only resource (unless she is peculiarly blest in her family circle) is to plunge into dissipation, by way of stifling reflection.

“What

“What becomes of those energies of the mind, that innate principle of rectitude, which might lead us to tower above our sex, and emulate the bright example of female worthies, recorded in the histories of our own and other countries?—All lost! or obscured by frivolous pursuits! Half the women we meet with in our progress through life, seem born for no better purpose: they therefore inspire no esteem; awaken no regrets; no sincere desire for seeing their condition meliorated, and that they may possess the joys of love, cemented into friendship by association.

“The beautiful Matilda excites all these wishes: my heart is deeply interested for her: I wish to press her to my bosom, and to call to her mind that, while innocent we can never be truly miserable. She might also be taught, that as mistress of such wealth, there are a thousand sources of enjoyment open to her, in relieving the indigent, and succouring the afflicted.

“In her circumstances much is required. Those who have always enjoyed profusion have many excuses to plead: but an individual,

vidual, who has tasted the bitterness of unexpected poverty, when raised from a state of dependence, ought to feel the most ecstatic pleasure in causing "the widow's heart to sing for joy."

"There are characters however, who can bear adversity, and have come out like the purest gold from the fire, apparently without alloy; yet in prosperity have "straight-way forgotten what manner of persons they were;" evincing to the world a lamentable proof of the frailty of human nature.

"A truce to sermonising," you will be tempted to cry out; at least I should expect such an exclamation from most men of your age. Be assured, if I did not consider you in another light than a mere *sprig of fashion*, such as infest the side-boxes, and the coffee-room at the Opera House, you would not have had the privilege of addressing me as a friend.

"I trust there are few people who know better than I do, the duties incumbent on that character. Concealment I abhor; therefore do not fear confiding even your follies to me: the very idea of being
in

in some degree compelled to record them, will operate as a preventive to the commission of many.

“ I will not promise to spare you, where I see cause to blame; though you may have little to dread from my severity for venial transgressions. Let any man, or woman either, endeavour to become thoroughly acquainted with their own hearts, before they condemn their neighbour.

“ It is perhaps fortunate for the female sex, that they have so little the power of seeking their own gratifications; and many among us lead virtuous exemplary lives, from not having been assailed by temptation.

“ That you and I may always have sufficient strength to *flee the tempter*, let him assume what shape he will, and to guard those avenues to the thoughts which would permit “ the sin that doth most easily beset us,” to enter, is my fervent prayer.

“ If you think fit, you may as a friend by reverberation, as Madame Sevigné elegantly expresses herself, offer my kind wishes to Mrs. Malcolm, and say how happy I should be in an opportunity of
testifying

testifying to the sister of the *gallant Young Norval*, the regard which he inspired, during his short residence among us.

“ I look forward with pleasure to the time fixed by Mr. Austen for his return. I cannot pay a visit to the Glanville family as I could wish, because of Miss Hartley. I have no reason to complain of this young lady’s conduct, yet I know not why I am sorry I permitted a stranger to be domesticated in my family.

“ Clara and Emily have certainly benefited much in many points by her residence with me; but they do not now appear to consider their every wish and hope centered in my approbation as they were wont to do.

“ I am not of a suspicious nature; therefore do not imagine I impute to Mr. Austen’s ward any undue influence on their minds: on the contrary, I am persuaded, could I bring myself to declare to her, that any part of their behaviour displeased me, she would represent it to them as if the knowledge of my uneasiness, and the cause that excited it, arose from
her

her own observation; and I have little doubt of their immediate acting in a different manner.

“It would be the first time, from the hour that I vowed at the altar *eternal fidelity* to their ever-to-be-regretted father, that I had found it necessary to use any means to induce them to do right, but by a look or a word from myself.

“Spirit of my departed Wentworth! support me at this trying hour, and teach me to act worthy of the sacred trust you reposed in me!

“I can add no more. Farewell.

“CAROLINE WENTWORTH.”

“How shall I express to you, my *revered, my amiable friend*, the pangs which I felt on reading the conclusion of your last, to *me*, truly kind letter.

“Hesitate not a single instant—tear that viper from your bosom; it is her who has undermined your peace. Where is the erect but timid countenance of innocence? In vain shall we seek for it in the artificial one of Miss Hartley! That she
may

may be chaste, I will not pretend to dispute; yet that may be from accident, or coldness of constitution.

“Look at her eye—is not dissimulation triumphant there? Her half suppressed voice, and honied accents—to what purpose all these allurements, but to entice the unwary, and fascinate the undiscerning? In truth, my beloved Mrs. Wentworth, you wanted your usual discretion in confiding so much to this girl, merely because she had a persuasive tongue.

“In your eager desire to extinguish my presumptuous hopes, (which it is the pride of my life to have entertained) you commanded my silence: I submitted, though most reluctantly; not conceiving it in the power of so contemptible a being to wound in any shape.

“I now perceive that we should never despise the artful woman, particularly her who is cased in adamant; and, though moved to anger, can wear the smile of complacency. This Miss Hartley can do, as I could prove, were it worth my while.

"I am but an inexperienced counsellor, you will say; yet at all events I entreat you rid your house of this heroine of romance; for none of those who adorn the page of a modern novel deal more in fiction, in regard to their family, fortune, and connexions, than this said damsel. || Herbert Campbell amused me, on our journey to town, with the recitals which she had made to the Rookes; some of them in his presence.

"Put no faith in a word she says, my good fellow," I replied: "at the school where she was educated, there have been some people of titles daughters, and on account of her musical talents and prepossessing appearance, she has been noticed by them, and probably invited to pass some time at their country seats: but such acquaintance will do your friend Rooke no good; he will never get promotion through their means."

"Young Rooke was certainly much attached to her; nor did his brother oppose the marriage, provided her present fortune, and future expectations, were equal

equal to what was reported: this, on inquiry, not proving to be the case, his approbation was consequently withdrawn; yet this immaculate young lady receives the captain's letters (though with her usual circumspection she takes care not to write any answers) through the medium of Miss Snelcroft, at whose house she frequently met him when you imagined they were both at the colonel's; the carriage being sent to your door for her was a contrivance of her lover. Be assured, however, that the countenance of Colonel and Mrs. Rooke were withdrawn from the lady long before they left the county:—*not being in love, they saw through her artifices*, and doubted not that a short time would suffice to clear young Rooke's optics.

“Believe me, I should not judge her thus severely for her deceit to you respecting her visits to the colonel's, if I imagined her influenced by real affection, and that this had blinded her to the consequence of detection; but, in truth, she had not a heart formed for so generous an inmate.

“A younger sister of mine passed some time under the same roof with her, and had delineated to me many of her properties before I saw her, though without mentioning any name.

“I chanced one day while at Merton Place to speak of my sister, and to say she was educated at Kensington, under the tuition of Mrs. Wilson, when I perceived Miss Hartley to change colour. You may remember how she interrupted our conversation the evening after the play: it was on that very morning the discovery was made, (for she acknowledged she was in the same seminary with Margaret) and she doubtless dreaded my communicating to you some anecdotes that might lower her in your estimation.

“My talents as a physiognomist having been so much contemned by you, I durst not venture to run the risk of exciting your further displeasure by mentioning, that from my sister I could gain positive information whether they had been in this instance successful. I will own to you that Campbell's account of the lady's high style

style of connexions, &c. corresponded so well with the sketch I had formerly received of Margaret's nameless friend, that I took immediate pains to ascertain the fact; and the advice which I have given arises from the most certain evidence that Miss Hartley possesses, in an eminent degree, the power of poisoning the minds of young people, and weakening the respect which they would otherwise entertain for their seniors ||

“ But to turn from this hateful subject to the amiable Matilda, who sends you a thousand thanks for the friendship you offer her, and begs, with the utmost earnestness, that you will meet her at some of the watering places between London and Edinburgh; whether twenty or thirty miles off the road is of little consequence, Mr. Malcolm being guided by her inclination.

“ Scarborough or Harrowgate will suit their convenience best; but if you prefer Buxton, Matlock, or any more favourite spot, it will be equally agreeable.

“ I wish such an excursion could be planned on your daughters account, immediately on the banishment of Miss Hartley; though six weeks hence is as early as Mrs. Malcolm can give you the meeting, her husband wishing to reach Edinburgh only in time for the Leith races, which do not begin this year till the second week in August.

“ I shall be of the party, (if I have your permission); and if you are inclined to go farther north, shall also escort you to the other side the Tweed, though I may not be able to prevail on you when there to give me a legal right to become your companion for life. Ah! my dear madam, this may be *badinage* in your opinion, though I am confident such a compliance would ensure my happiness; and I have the vanity to think, in according it, you would run little risk of endangering yours.

“ Pardon this egotism; and let me hear, as speedily as possible, that you have taken my advice in regard to Miss Hartley. Command my services on all occasions,

sions, without fearing to feed my chimerical projects by so doing.

“ When I am less absorbed by a sense of your present situation, by hearing that peace is restored to your family circle, and Miss Hartley dismissed, I shall be more able to enter on that self-examination, which is requisite previous to the registering of my follies for your inspection and correction. With unfeigned respect and admiration, believe me to be, dear madam, truly yours,

“ ROBERT BELTON.”

CHAP. XXV.

“ Ah! that deceit should steal such gentle shape,
“ And, with a virtuous vizor, hide deep vice!”

SHAKESPEARE.

“ **W**HAT shall I say in vindication of my own folly in being so easily deceived, as I have been, respecting Miss Hartley? She is gone; and could you believe it? both my daughters.

“ Soon after dispatching my last to you, I observed that the girls were apparently full of expectation, and that Miss Hartley, if possible, was more soft and insinuating in her attentions to me than she had ever been.

“ A letter from Mr. Caldwell, my quondam attorney, soon unravelled the mystery, by stating, that in the course of the day on which that communication would reach Merton Place, he would call upon me at the desire of the Miss Wentworths, who were by no means satisfied with remaining under my protection, unless

less they were permitted to enjoy the society of young people like themselves.

“ Petrified at the contents, I was little disposed to converse with any of my family on the subject; nor had I much time for reflection, the gentleman driving up to the gate in less than an hour after the postman had delivered his dispatches.

“ On accosting me he pretended to feel a great deal of sorrow for the errand on which he came; but, as having been nominated the young ladies guardian by his *late worthy friend*, he was under the necessity of telling me, that as they were now of an age to choose their place of residence, and from their having objected to him to living wholly in the country, he had engaged board and lodging for them in a house of great respectability at the west end of the town, where there was no doubt of their being well introduced into company, and probably soon getting advantageous settlements, which, from the recluse life they now led, they were deprived of doing.

“Certainly, Sir ;” replied I, “if the Miss Wentworths prefer living in the metropolis, and away from my protection, I have not the smallest desire or intention of controlling them.” Ringing the bell, I desired the ladies to be called, told them, in as few words as possible, that they had my full consent to depart, as I knew the lady at the head of the house to which they were going would pay them proper attention: and as Mr. Caldwell had offered to take charge of them on the road, thought they had better, his time being of some value, set out immediately after dinner, not doubting but, from the secrecy they had observed in the instance of their application to him, they had also taken care to have their wardrobe prepared for a sudden removal. Giving no opportunity for a reply, I left the room; for, in truth, nature was nearly exhausted.

“Disappointed and defeated in all my schemes for the benefit of these girls, I felt as if I had but that moment lost my husband. Ah! thought I, Edward Glanville is revenged. That name was like an electrical

electrical shock—I flew to my cabinet, and breaking the seal of that letter which, when I last saw you, I knew not that I should ever open, I there saw this very event predicted.

“Subdued more than I can express, by the perusal of the whole epistle, as well as the contemplation of the pictures, I could scarce command myself sufficiently to ring for my maid to know when dinner would be ready, that I might endeavour to prepare for taking the head of the table with some degree of composure.

“When she answered the summons, Miss Hartley also begged admittance, requesting, in the name of the young ladies, to know whether I was determined that they should set out on that day? My reply was, that my character was too decided a one to admit of their supposing, for a moment, that I could wish them to remain a single hour in my house beyond what was absolutely necessary, after hearing that they had already secured a residence in another.

“This firmness disconcerted the young lady;—mortified, at her reception, she curtied, and silently withdrew.

“At dinner I found only Mr. Caldwell, the ladies petitioning, through the medium of my servant, for leave to absent themselves on account of preparing for their journey. You will conclude our meal could not be a very comfortable one. The gentleman, I believe, was wholly unprepared for my ready acquiescence, and found himself a little hampered by my taking him at his word in putting the young ladies under his protection to town.

“I formally asked him what sum was requisite to lodge in his hands for the journey, and whether he had agreed to pay their board quarterly; requesting also to settle with him the mode in which the money was to be remitted for their maintenance; specifying the allowance I intended to grant them for that purpose, without soliciting his opinion as to the propriety of it.

“This

“ This decisiveness of manner, I saw, nettled the worthy attorney; that however did not disturb me. Mr. Austen, I knew, would return before the expiration of the first three months, and to him I should devolve the charge of his sisters-in-law; perfectly satisfied that he would be ready to do every thing for their advantage. By that time I was pretty confident they would bitterly regret their having quitted a paternal dwelling for a residence among strangers—the more so, from its having been the result of their own folly.

“ When the chaise came to the door, the ladies were informed that their escort was ready. I desired Millfont to say, that I hoped their trunks, which were too heavy for conveyance by any other mode than the waggon, were also packed, as I should take the earliest opportunity of sending them to London.

“ My own inflexibility on the occasion astonished myself: the girls, so unaccustomed to such sternness from me, appeared like powerless beings, who were dragged from room to room unconscious that they moved

moved from one spot. Naturally timid, they durst not look up in my face.—“ I hope you will enjoy much pleasure in your new situation,” said I, as Miss Hartley assisted them across the hall: “ Mr. Caldwell will inform me as soon as you arrive at your journey’s end; I shall then write to Mrs. Parker, who will doubtless pay you every attention in her power.”

“ I saw the little Emily’s heart was ready to burst, while Clara’s countenance bore evident marks of the sorrow and compunction which pervaded her bosom. I could have wept over them and forgiven them all, when the significant looks passing between Miss Hartley and Mr. Caldwell roused me to a sense of what I owed myself.—“ Is the carriage ready,” I articulated.—“ It is, madam,” said Thomas, while the tear trickled down his furrowed cheek.—“ Then farewell, children, and may God Almighty protect you from all harm!”—I rushed from them; Emily would have fallen upon her knees had not Miss Hartley supported her. In a few minutes they were out of sight, the post-

post-boy driving with as much quickness as if running a race.

“ In the evening I sent for Miss Hartley, telling her, I hoped her friend Miss Snelcroft could accommodate her, if she wished to remain in this part of the country, for that having an excursion to make, which would take up some time, I knew not how soon I might leave my own house, and I could not imagine that a residence in it during my absence would be at all desirable. She stammered out something like thanks for my great kindness, and sorrow for what had happened, which she had done every thing in her power to prevent.

“ Not a word upon the occurrences of the day, Miss Hartley; you doubtless have little to say on that subject, which could elucidate a mystery that time only can unravel. When do you think you could be certain enough in your plans to inform me at what time you were likely to leave Merton Place ?”—“ I have resolved,” said she, “ to go to London on Friday; Mr. Caldwell has been kind
enough

enough to take charge of a letter to a friend there, who will expect me at the end of the week."

"Something like a fear of detection lurked in her eye; at least your letter, which I received next morning, made me, on recollection, fancy this to have been discernible. Surely, my good friend, I must have been the means of marring this girl's fortune, (or, at least, that she imagines so) else what could have excited her displeasure, treating her, as I have invariably done, with all the kindness in my power. Perhaps she meditated a conquest of Mr. Austen; but certainly his addresses to Charlotte were voluntary on his part, and not the effect of any artifices I had made use of.

"Thank Heaven she is now gone; and though I shunned her company as much as possible, I suffered her to depart without my having given any indication that I suspected her artifices. I go to spend the remainder of the summer with Mrs. Glanville; therefore am obliged to decline meeting Mrs. Malcolm; which,
had

had I been differently circumstanced, would have given me inexpressible pleasure.

“ You were doubtless privy to the contents of the letter, perused by me, while labouring under such agitation of spirits. Lacerated as my heart has ever been, since I knew how to distinguish good from evil, can you believe I would put your generosity to so severe a test as to comply with your reiterated requests? *You* are in the prime of life, *I* am in the wane; if you were my husband I should expect attentions which in a few years you might be disposed to pay at the shrine of youth and beauty.

“ As my husband and my lover have both been consigned to an early grave, a state of widowhood is my choice. I have no brother—you may supply that place. I have yet a daughter, whose worth and goodness I should wish to see rewarded by being happily united to a man of sense and feeling, such as I know you to be. I presume not to dictate; the affections are not to be biassed; I only name Alicia to
you

you as a proof of my affectionate regard, and the lively interest I take in your concerns. That I should inspire such lasting attachment in Glanville and Wentworth, is sufficiently gratifying to my feelings.

“Be assured I shall always rejoice to hear of your welfare: but to know that you have entered the honourable state of matrimony with a woman who is deserving both of love and esteem, will now afford me sincere pleasure.

“May I request your attention to Clara and Emily? they are young, and much to be pitied for becoming the dupe of their artful companion. Address to me at the Rev. Mr. Glanville’s, for I set out to-morrow. Remember me to Mrs. Malcolm, and make a proper excuse for my not being able to comply with so flattering a request. I hope we shall all meet in London at the return of Mr. Austen. I am, with real regard, your sincere friend,

“CAROLINE WENTWORTH.”

CHAP. XXVI.

- “ O Heaven! thy will be done.
“ The best physician here I find,
“ To cure a sore, diseased mind;
“ For soon this venerable gloom
“ Will yield a weary sufferer room;
“ No more a slave to love decreed,
“ At ease, and freed among the dead.”

HAMILTON.

“ **I**N this last awful hour, when I feel that yet a very little while, and all that is mortal of me will be consigned to its native earth; at such a season my heart points to thee, my beloved Caroline, as to its natural centre of attraction; and next to the hopes of Heaven, my soul delights to dwell upon thine inestimable worth.

“ Wentworth himself will not envy me the luxury of this address: for once in my life suffer me to enjoy the privilege of loquacity; hitherto silence and submission have been the bitter pills which you compelled me to swallow.

“ Oh!

“ Oh! why did I obey your cruel injunction when I tore myself from you at Matlock? Little did I imagine I should so soon have heard you had given yourself to another. The conviction that I then had of your attachment to myself, lulled me into a security fatal to us both.

“ When I wrote to you the instant after our interview, I believed my relinquishing all hope of obtaining your hand to be essential to your peace: with that idea fully impressed on my mind, and with a determination to cherish a passion which constituted the principal charm of my existence, I left Mrs. Belton’s house.

“ In my solitary retreat, I exulted at the recollection that I was beloved, and that none but myself had been able to inspire such sentiments in you; nor was it probable, from the knowledge I had of your extreme delicacy, that any other would possess that power. These visionary dreams occupied me for some months; at the end of that time, I found I must yet make another effort by declaring to my father and mother how dear you were to me,

me, and requesting their influence might be exerted in my favour. My father's strong solicitude for my marrying, and convinced as he must have been, by my declarations, that I would never become the husband of any other woman than yourself, would, I conceived, overcome those obstacles which you considered insuperable.

“ Already had I arranged every point in my imagination, and was setting out for Mistlewood, when I received a letter from my mother, communicating your marriage, which was to take place on the very day I perused the fatal intelligence. The possibility of putting a stop to it was the first mad thought that entered my brain; then the distance I was from Liverpool; and if there, the little right I had to interfere. The next reflection arose from a certainty that you never loved me. What I fancied to be proofs of it, were only the hypocritical arts of the sex which I now forswore for ever. I then endeavoured to despise, hate, and revile you.

“ In this paroxysm of rage and disappointment it at last occurred to me, that
probably

probably to crush my aspiring hopes, which you well knew could never be wholly extinguished while you remained single, had prompted you to enter into engagements that you might greatly repent. This disarmed me. I trembled to think of the misery I might occasion. Seeking for consolation from the very letter that had plunged me into despair, I found my mother gave the highest character of Mr. Wentworth; and from a consideration of the children, she added, how fortunate he had been in obtaining you; for they never would feel the loss of their own mother, since you had undertaken to fill her place.

“ Meditating on this detail, I penetrated into your motives for forming the connexion; and though the prospect for myself was a dreary void, to be filled up as chance directed, yet I trusted your lot would be a more fortunate one. Firmly resolved never to attempt conversing with you, I could not deny myself the pleasure of gazing on you for the last time.

“ In the groves of Clarmont I enjoyed this satisfaction. Disguised in the habit of a peasant, I loitered long in the park : at
last

last you came leaning on Wentworth's arm. Happy mortal! thrice happy! that he contented himself with possessing your esteem and friendship, without aspiring to your love!

“As you passed me you were in earnest conversation. He spoke of Emma: you sighed. Ah thought I, that aspiration is sacred! Edward Glanville awakened it! I supported myself against a tree till you returned: I then had a full view of both. Shall I own my littleness of mind? I was mortified to see the manly, intelligent countenance of my rival lighted up with smiles, arising from the consciousness of the treasure he possessed. From that moment I never trusted myself with another look; though I omitted no opportunity of enquiring after your welfare.

“That you have acted a mother's part by your adopted children I have heard from every one: I hope and trust you will be rewarded for all your cares. If Wentworth returns to you, I know you will. Should, however, the fate of war deprive you of him, believe *me* there is little probability

bability of your obtaining any, save what will result from the consciousness of acting uprightly.

“ May you never, with good King Lear, feel

“ How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is

“ To have a thankless child.”

Your daughters will be taught to think, if they are not disposed to do it themselves, that all you have done is not enough, or that you have some sinister end in view by treating them with so much kindness.

“ Ah, Caroline! had you been less rigid in your notions of honor, it would have been better for us. *My* impetuosity of temper, too, which I took no pains to conceal, assisted your resolution. You know not, my sweet friend, what I might have been, had you deigned to become the arbitress of my fate. *Your* gentleness would have softened *my* ferocity; while the constant opposition I met with from you soured a disposition but little accustomed to restraint.

“ I cannot dissemble now; therefore pardon me for saying, that I think it was more in my power to contribute to your happiness

happiness than your husband's, worthy as he is. He had been united to another, and had objects before him to recall her to his memory every hour; while you could not forget, that "some things had been and were most dear to you."

"Forgive my wanderings, and weep not, most amiable and exemplary of women, for what the world may deem my untimely fate! I grieve not at parting from thee; but rather congratulate myself, that now the only obstacle to your perfect felicity is removed.

"That I am thus calm and resigned to the decrees of unerring wisdom is owing to that invaluable young man, who, though my shattered frame baffles medical skill, has found the way to "minister to a mind diseased, to pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, and to raze the written troubles of the brain." This has *thy friend* Belton done. Your discernment espied his merit while under the veil of obscurity. He considers you as his tutelary angel; and I dare venture to affirm his gratitude will end only with his life.

“ How much am I indebted to you for prevailing on him to come to us ! To his care will this packet be entrusted. With it he has a casket, containing two portraits. Do not distress yourself with conjecturing how I obtained yours ; it is a secret that I will carry with me to my grave. The writing on the inside of the case will inform you how many years it has been in my possession. The other I hope you will accept as a tribute of the purest affection that mortality is capable of feeling.

“ The pulse has almost ceased to beat. Every throb, more languid than the last, reminds me how very soon my course will be finished. In the immense space opening to my view, self is lost. I greatly participate in your happiness ; and my sincere prayer is, that in the world to which we are all hastening we may meet, and taste that calm serenity which can never be experienced in this vale of tears.

“ Till that blissful period arrives, beloved Caroline, farewell.

“ EDWARD GLANVILLE.

CHAP. XXVII.

“ When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
but in battalions.”

SHAKESPEARE.

I PRESUME, my dear friend, you have perused the affecting epistle of Mr. Glanville. How many bitter tears did it cost me ! That I had not forfeited his esteem, by my marriage with Mr. Wentworth, was my chief consolation.

How truly I was beloved, even to the last hour of existence, was now evident, had it before been dubious. The idea that I was going to the family of this ever to be regretted young man, as a refuge from all my troubles, was peculiarly gratifying, in the present state of my mind.

Emma was at last to be made acquainted with a secret that I had hitherto most carefully kept from her knowledge. The disclosure would be painful: but at this season my heart must be relieved by com-

municating what pressed most heavily upon it.

When I arrived at the rectory, Mr. and Mrs. Glanville, with their groupe of lovely children, made me forget the recent shock I had sustained. "Why have not the Miss Wentworths accompanied you?" was the exclamation, after the joys of meeting had a little subsided.

"They are gone to London," I answered.

"Without you! What are we to think of all this?"

An explanation naturally followed.

The ardency of my amiable friend made her astonished at my composure on the occasion. She was almost determined to set out immediately for London, in order to bring Miss Hartley to the condign punishment she merited, till I bade her recollect that, when there, what proof had we of her guilt? and of what advantage could the mortification of such a reptile be to either of us? Mr. Glanville, with more calmness, offered to take the journey, in order to see how the girls were situated, and to learn

learn in what manner they had been mentioned to Mrs. Parker. This kindness, you will believe, I readily accepted, fearing that I might hereafter blame myself for not searching more deeply into Mr. Caldwell's views before I permitted their departure from Merton Place. I knew the gentleman bore a fair character, and was respectably married, which made me follow the impulse of the moment more readily than I should otherwise have done. You will, however, easily conceive, that after such a proof of duplicity and cunning on the part of the girls, who doubtless had carried on a correspondence with Mr. Caldwell, (most likely through the medium of Miss Hartley) I could with a very ill grace have received them at my table as I was wont to do; yet rather than have suffered them to depart under the charge of an improper person, I would have submitted to many inconveniences.

Mr. Glanville set out on his friendly mission the next morning, promising to return as soon as he had accomplished

the object of it; and that excepting a few lines to assure us of his safe arrival, we need not expect any other account from him, being confident he could enter on no detail that would be minute enough to satisfy his wife and her friend.

When left to ourselves, Mrs. Glanville became mistress of every particular already related. On perusing her brother-in-law's letters, the astonishment that seized her, first at my inflexibility, and afterwards at my inviolable secrecy, even to her, would hardly admit of her expressing herself rationally on the subject. Her abhorrence of Miss Hartley, and contempt of the Miss Wentworths, increased in proportion with her respect for me.

Most bitterly did she regret not knowing Mr. Glanville intimately, previous to my marriage; she fancied he might then have found a person to whom he could confide the origin of his secret grief; and her sanguine disposition saw no obstacles to our union but what could have been easily surmounted. The happiness which the restoration of this darling son would have

have diffused through the whole family rose to her view; and she did not recollect that if the event which followed my desertion had not proved the excess of his attachment, it would not have been credited by his father; consequently, though a consent should have been extorted, yet a cordial union between Sir Henry and his son might never afterwards have taken place.

At the return of Mr. Glanville, I received assurances from Mrs. Parker, that her best endeavours should be exerted to afford the Miss Wentworths every advantage which a residence in her family could procure them. Miss Hartley had attempted to get into her house as their appendage; and had not some hints from Mr. Glanville deterred her, this worthy woman might probably have been seduced by her wily arts, and the young lady continued to impose upon her acquaintance, by making them believe she had succeeded to most of her father's property, which at a future period (as she took care to state) was likely to be much more considerable than at present.

Before I could determine on the propriety of paying Lady Glanville a visit, as I wished to keep the defection of my daughters as secret as I could, we were roused by a summons from the castle to attend her ladyship, as it was believed, for the last time, from her having been suddenly attacked by a severe illness, which was likely to prove fatal. We did not arrive in time to pay those attentions which are as gratifying to the receiver as to those who have the power, at such an interval, of testifying their high sense of the worth of the person they are about to lose for ever.

The sight of such near and dear connexions roused her from the torpid state in which she had lain for some time. The exertion, however, was too much for her frame: she expired almost without a sigh.

This unexpected event made me forget all my own petty troubles. Absorbed by the grief into which every one around me was plunged, I thought only of them, and the irreparable loss we had sustained.

Sir

Sir Henry was, in truth, a sincere mourner. You will conclude that his sorrow was not displayed by uttering loud complaints or lamentations. He suffered me to converse with him, when he shut out the females of his own family. Mr. Glanville and myself, indeed relieved each other in our attendance, till the funeral was over; we then prevailed on him to accompany us to the rectory, where, on my arrival, I found the following letter from Dr. Belton:

“ I have obeyed your commands, my dear madam, in paying my devoirs to the Miss Wentworths, who were not a little disconcerted at sight of me. On being told that it was by your desire I had taken that liberty, their countenances brightened, inquiring with the most anxious solicitude after your health, requesting at the same time to know where you were, as Miss Hartley had informed them of your quitting Merton-Place. I was very guarded in my conversation; yet I think they must be miserably deficient in penetration, it

my contempt for their friend and adviser was not discernible.

“ Mrs. Caldwell had invited them to her house when it was filled with company, none of whom they found particularly attractive. The young ladies who compose Mrs. Parker’s family have their own connexions, who take them out both to private parties and public places; when our young friends are, from the want of such protectresses, compelled to remain at home. This apparent desertion they feel most keenly; and instead of wishing to meet those families to whom as your daughters they were introduced when under your auspices, they fear to encounter any individual of their former acquaintance lest inquiries might ensue which would lead to a discovery of their having, by their own folly, forfeited your protection and regard.

“ In short, the present state of their minds is by no means an enviable one; yet I sincerely wish their punishment to be of some duration; and though I shall occasionally inquire after their welfare, and
keep

keep some kind of watch upon their conduct, I shall be the last person to endeavour to extenuate the ingratitude they have shewn for your unexampled care of their interests—to say nothing of the maternal tenderness with which all who have the happiness to be intimately acquainted in your family know you treated them.

“Your last was forwarded to me at Mr. Malcolm’s seat in Berkshire, whither I had gone to pass a few days, and where I left its amiable mistress labouring under a dejection of spirits which almost infected the whole party assembled there.

“She strongly lamented your inability to join her on the road to Scotland, as proposed. I do not think her husband will be able to leave England for some months, if at all this year. When I left them, they purposed passing a month at Clifton, where the major was to be their attendant. This man looks at me with a scrutinizing eye; and without daring to ask why I am the friend of Matilda, the question seems hovering on his lips every time we meet.

“Allan Montgomery has reached his destined port ; and hearing of the changes that have taken place in his absence, he set off for the Highlands, to take possession of the estate of his ancestors, with a determination to shun the presence of his still-adored mistress ; for which resolution, all who are anxious for the preservation of her peace must both respect and regard him.

“I account myself truly fortunate in possessing the esteem and confidence of two such characters as Mrs. Wentworth and Mrs. Malcolm, if it were only to impress on my mind the utter impossibility of attaining to perfect felicity while “tenants of a mansion in this fleshy nook.”

“Many parts of your letter must remain unanswered. *Your* recommendation will have its due weight: at this moment it is not necessary to say more.

“That you have had the power of soothing and comforting the father of Edward Glanville, at this most trying season, I sincerely rejoice. If we may indulge ourselves in the hope that the departed spirits
of

of the just, made perfect, are at all conscious of what is passing in the world they have quitted, I can imagine that the excellent son, whose fate we have deplored, is secretly aiding you in your attentions to his parent.

“ When I see so many rational beings mispending their precious time, as a very cursory view of the fashionable world daily affords, I feel no small degree of self-congratulation from having been reared by a mother, who at an early age impressed me with a thorough sense of the blessings we enjoy in being permitted to call ourselves Christians. To have been enabled to discharge some part of the obligations conferred by her is a privilege which I would not exchange for any other wealth can give.

“ That I may render a faithful account of what has been committed to my care to that awful Judge who is the searcher of all hearts, is the earnest prayer of, dearest madam,

“ Your faithful friend and servant,

“ ROBERT BELTON.”

To

To hear that the girls were well, and apparently sorry for what they had done, afforded me some satisfaction. A letter from Alicia, intimating that the continental party were soon to return home, increased it not a little.

Finding full employment in my attendance on Sir Henry, I began gradually to forget the disappointment I had experienced, and to consider myself fortunate in being at liberty to devote my time wholly to his service. That my friend the physician bid fair for retaining the principles so carefully instilled by his valuable mother, contributed also to reconciling me to the "busy hum of men," particularly as he expressed no repugnance to an union with Alicia.

When we believed Sir Henry's spirits considerably better, and his health re-established, he was suddenly seized with a convulsion fit, from which he never recovered.

It seemed as if Providence had afforded me an opportunity of testifying to the father what I would have done for the son,
had.

had not a combination of cruel circumstances always separated us. That I had no self-reproach to encounter for any part of my conduct to the family, from the first hour of my entering it to the present, was my chief consolation in following the head to the grave; praying, at the same time, that his virtues might be transmitted to his latest posterity.

Having little inducement to return to Merton-Place, I determined on disposing of it, and to continue with Sir Charles and Lady Glanville till the return of Mr. Austen should make me desirous of having a home to receive Alicia in.

A packet from the continent, inclosing the following from Clara and Emily to their sister, was at this time put into my hands. Judge of the indignation excited by its perusal. Those who may take the trouble of decyphering these pages will not readily believe that such a character as Miss Hartley's can really exist. *I*, who have had such ample opportunity for studying it, am almost inclined to doubt the evidence of my own senses on the occasion.

That

That this young woman should carefully conceal from me her acquaintance with Mr. Caldwell, shewed her to be mistress of a degree of political foresight that few of our sex are endowed with. It seems this gentleman had a ward, who was placed with Mrs. Wilson ; and Miss Hartley being quite this lady's *factotum*, had frequently conversed with him when he came to Kensington. By an accidental mentioning of the name of Wentworth, an explanation ensued, which informed the lady of the *possibility* of Mr. Caldwell's becoming the guardians of the daughters of Captain Wentworth, who, by his conversation, very plainly testified the gratification he should receive on being invested with the title.

At so distant a period as that already described she recollected the wish of her casual friend ; and when, by her artifices, my inexperienced, innocent girls were become disgusted with my manner of living, she pointed out this mode of their being freed from my jurisdiction, not doubting but in accomplishing this point for the
honest

honest lawyer, she should receive some remuneration that would enable her to figure off, for the winter, in London, on a footing with his wards; and during that time some lucky hit might fix her in the rank in life she was so ambitious of filling.

How short-sighted are the most wary! She did not calculate that, by doing this, she must lose the solid advantages that might be derived from Mr. Austen's protection and my countenance; and above all, that in endeavouring to calumniate her indulgent hostess, she was guilty of a crime that would one day or other draw down the vengeance of Heaven on her head.

My ready acquiescence, as I have before stated, puzzled the whole party. Miss Hartley, in particular, found *herself* *thrown out*; and instead of returning to London with *eclat*, as she had planned, was compelled to put up with a very inferior situation to board in, all arrangements with Mrs. Parker having been made for her friends previous to her arrival; and Mr. Caldwell finding her services no longer

longer necessary, very ungallantly made his bow, instead of affording that pecuniary assistance, which, had her behaviour been otherwise, she could have claimed from Mr. Austen.

May the schemes of the wicked to injure innocent individuals, always prove as abortive; and, in the end, cover themselves with shame, equal to what this young woman has had to endure!

CHAP. XXVIII.

“ Nos actions sont comme des bout-rimés, que chacune tourne comme il lui plaît.” ROCHEFOUCAULT.

“ To Miss Alicia Wentworth.

“ Dear Alicia,

“ **W***HAT* will Charlotte, Mr. Austen, and yourself say, at finding we have left Merton Place, and are settled in a house in London, under the care of Mr. Caldwell? We have a long story to tell, which, we hope, will be listened to by all of you; and that you will not treat us with the silent contempt we experienced from our mother, though we certainly deserved no better at her hands, as she could not tell the pains that had been taken to deceive us.

“ That Miss Hartley, with all her winning ways, was no good fight to either of us, so happy as we used to be before we listened to her tales about mamma, Mr. Glanville, and we don't know what.

“ From

“ From the time that the regiment left the neighbourhood, Miss Hartley never let us rest for talking of the pleasure of living in London; and what a pity it was we should be so moped to enrich mamma, who was making up an excellent privy purse to bestow upon her favourite, Dr. Belton: the father and daughters were alike easily duped. After a number of hints of this and other kinds, which excited our curiosity, we insisted on knowing to what they alluded, and how she became so familiar with mamma’s history before she was married.

“ Much solicitation induced her to confess that a great deal of her information was gained from Mrs. Wilson, whom she lived with at Kensington, who had been governess in Sir Henry Glanville’s family when mamma first went to live there. This lady assured her, that the elder Mr. Glanville had been encouraged by mamma, as a lover, for many years; that she had even given him her picture, and of course accepted his; but finding, on his return from the continent, that he did not come forward

forward as she expected, she had given hopes to our father, with a view to stimulate the other; which not having the desired effect, she had, in a fit of vexation, married him, lest she might be tempted to do worse, though her heart and affections were evidently in Mr. Glanville's possession. Nor did he ever recover the shock her infidelity to him occasioned; as he was, at the very time it occurred, endeavouring to reconcile his family to the connexion, who would not hear of it; nor did they, (particularly Lady Glanville) hold any communication with the object that excited this attachment till years after Mr. Glanville's death; when our father had also paid the debt of nature.

“ The dominion exercised by mamma over those who were attached to her, could not be more strongly exemplified than in the disposition of our father's fortune; for doubtless *his* will was of *her* dictating. A *step-mother*, and a woman of no family or fortune, to have the guidance and direction of our persons and property, was a most extraordinary thing. It was so much
her

her interest to keep us single; we stood little chance of marrying while inmates in her house: as a proof of this she instanced Charlotte's marriage, which would never have taken place, had not her acquaintance with Mr. Austen commenced while on a visit at Mr. Ellison's.

"Little as either of us wished to be distinguished in that way, we could not brook the idea of being deprived of those privileges which all of our age and rank in life possess.

"Another mode of weakening our respect for the character hitherto so deservedly revered by us, was, her insinuations with respect to Dr. Belton; who, it is true, seemed to consider our presence as a bar to his enjoyments; nor could we avoid remarking, that our entrance sometimes put a stop to apparently interesting conversation, and that it required some minutes recollection to enable the gentleman to take his part in a general one.

"In short, it is impossible to relate all the artful tales fabricated by this young woman to delude our imaginations. She had

had been at school with a sister of Dr. Belton's, who doubtless had expressed a high sense of obligation for the notice her family received from our mother when she was a visitor of Mrs. Belton's. This artful creature pretended to have heard, that the will of the old lady was all concerted by her, who, since she could not be the heiress herself, had contrived that her relation should bestow the bulk of her fortune on this favourite, who was truly a creature of her own.

“ All these things were told to us as if reluctantly, and with no view, excepting our benefit. In an evil hour we determined on applying to Mr. Caldwell, in the hope that his coming to Merton Place, and advising our mother to spend some of the winter in London, would lead us into society, and make our time pass more pleasantly than it had done since your departure.

“ To our utter astonishment when he came, we found it was instantly determined that we were to set out for the capital; and when we wished to request an interview, in the hope of obtaining forgiveness,
or

or a reprieve for some days, Miss Hartley offered to be our mediator with our mother, but soon returned, saying, she was so engaged in weeping over some papers with the Glanville arms on them, and a picture, which seemed to engross her whole attention, that it was impossible to make her think of us.

“ With heavy hearts we therefore obeyed the mandate before conveyed to us; nor did we dare go into the parlour to dinner, much as we wished for an opportunity of speaking to her.

“ When we actually found ourselves on the road, and under the care of a man hardly known to us, our hearts sickened at the prospect, and we bitterly regretted the moment in which we were induced to listen to the insinuations of Miss Hartley.

“ Our troubles did not end with our journey; they rather augmented, on hearing we were to be placed in a house where there was not a person we had ever seen, or who could have the smallest interest in promoting our happiness. Spare us the
mor-

mortification of relating all we have suffered ; too soon did we feel we had relinquished the substance for the shadow.

“ The first gleam of satisfaction we experienced arose from a visit from Dr. Belton, who told us, it was by our mother’s desire he paid it. Mr. Glanville, too, soon found us out ; whom we really believe had left the country purposely to discover in what manner Mr. Caldwell had settled us with Mrs. Parker.

“ Such kind solicitude on the part of a parent so justly incensed, subdued us more than we can express. Our folly and ingratitude in quitting so kind a protectress at the instigation of a stranger rose forcibly to our view ; and the fear of drawing down some signal punishment on our heads by such conduct made us completely wretched.


“ To our mother we dare not write ; our only hope of reconciliation rests with you, whose influence, we know, is great. The death of Lady Glanville must have been severely felt ; perhaps, in the excess of grief at her loss, any application from us would be doubly disagreeable. To what

a distant period must we therefore look forward for a renewal of our communication with her.

“ Ah, Alicia! if you had not left England, this could not have happened. Yet you also were fond of Miss Hartley, and believed her amiable. She called to see us soon after we came to town, but not meeting the reception she expected, there is little reason to imagine she will repeat her visit. Her apparent desire to fasten herself upon us, shews that the recitals she amused us with of past transactions and former grandeur could have had no foundation in truth, or else her circle of acquaintance must be too brilliant to need any aid from our family connexions. We now fear there was little reliance to be placed on any thing she uttered; and that the discovering such duplicity under so fascinating a form will deter us from forming any friendships even where the parties may possess a sufficient portion of merit to conciliate our regard.

"The moment you receive this, write, dearest Alicia, to our more than mother.

Plead

18th Street
New York
to 

Plead our cause with your wonted energy; and do not, we beseech you, deny us your commiseration, though our present distresses have been undoubtedly of our own bringing on. Say every thing to Charlotte and Mr. Austen to induce them to overlook our fault; for, in truth, we know not how to forgive ourselves.

“ Your truly distressed sisters,
“ CLARA and EMILY WENTWORTH.”

CHAP. XXIX.

“——’Tis slander; whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue outvenoms all the worms of Nile; whose breath rides on the posting winds, and doth belie all corners of the world; kings, queens, and states, maids, matrons; nay, the secrets of the grave this viperous slander enters.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“ *To Mrs. Wentworth.*”

“ **I**F you have not, my dearest madam, thrown all who bear the name of Wentworth entirely from your remembrance, suffer me to express to you the deep regret which pervaded my bosom on perusing the letter from Clara and Emily, which I now take the liberty of inclosing for your inspection.

“ To intercede for them, duty and inclination alike prompts me. To extenuate their offences I have not the power; “ Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son,” is the only language possible to be adopted on the occasion. You know my heart too well
not

not to believe, that should the "fatted calf" be killed as a token of forgiveness, the objects of mercy could not more unfeignedly rejoice at the circumstance than I should.

"Charlotte and myself have scarce had a dry eye since we received the mortifying intelligence of our sisters dereliction. Mr. Austen says little, though we can easily perceive that he accuses himself as the author of all, from having been the means of introducing that serpent into the family. He will hasten our departure; for, in truth, now the hours drag heavily along; and though apparently in pursuit of novelty, we are in England in idea, tracing the ravages which so short an absence has occasioned in our domestic circle.

"James Hartley has again become troublesome to his friends, who will never make another effort to save him from the disgrace which his own imprudence and extravagance have brought upon him. His sister might have sufficient food for meditation in lamenting his propensities, with-

out seeking, by the indulgence of her own, to add to the uneasiness which he occasions to all connected with him.

“ You must pardon, my dear madam, the temerity which induces me to say, that on the first discovery of your influence over my sisters being lessened, you should, indeed you should, have sent away your *ungrateful guest*; a character no less abhorred in the present day, than in those of the Greeks and Romans. Alas ! how degrading is it to human nature to be obliged to confess that a being can be found that will sit down at your table, and enjoy all the benefits in your power to confer, who, while receiving them, is endeavouring to undermine your peace. The same disposition would, with as little remorse, bereave a helpless creature of its means of subsistence.

“ I do not now wonder that long life and a commerce with the world beget distrust and suspicion of those whom common occurrences bring in our way. Clara and Emily have had a severe lesson. Their
loss

loss is indeed irreparable; for such a parent as you have been to us, few children are blest with.

“That *I* may live to prove *my* gratitude, and to forget the errors of *their* youth, is now my predominant wish; and I most ardently pray for its accomplishment, as well as for your health and happiness. Suffer me to subscribe myself, dearest madam, your ever affectionate, and dutiful daughter,

“ALICIA WENTWORTH.”

“I ought to have made some apology for obtruding upon you such a combination of slanderous falsehoods; but I knew not how to plead for my beloved sisters in any words so adapted to the purpose as their own. That the ashes of departed friends should have been raked, rather than that her intelligence should be deemed incomplete, is the strongest proof of *innate* malevolence that the human mind is capable of receiving. Once more, my beloved mother, adieu. A. W.”

Such an epistle I should have expected from the uniform tenor of the writer's conduct. That I should have my cares rewarded by securing two of my daughters as props to declining life, ought to compensate for all the troubles I had or might endure, from a desire to fulfil my duty to the whole. Determined not to withhold my forgiveness at a proper season, I yet most firmly resolved that Alicia alone should live with me.

I have made many sacrifices for the Miss Wentworths; it was now time to think of myself. Mr. Austen might probably have no objection to the younger ones residing with him; and as his house would naturally be the resort of good company, they would stand a better chance of earlier obtaining homes of their own, than if mixing in the circle which might be most suitable to my disposition. Having found little either of inclination or leisure for writing, I received another letter from Dr. Belton.

“Pardon, my dear madam, the earnest solicitude which prompts me to inquire
after

after your health. The death of Sir Henry is, I trust, the sole cause of your silence.

“ While we lament the loss of such a character, we can hardly help condemning our own selfishness; for surely to quit this life full of years, leaving an honourable name and a virtuous offspring to perpetuate our good deeds, without having been subjected to the infirmities of old age, or the imbecility of mind, its frequent attendant, is to have attained to the summit of human ambition.—Pass but a little while, and in the course of Nature the seventh age would have come on. Alas! how deplorable is the picture! *Sans* teeth, *sans* taste, *sans* every thing!—Fond as we are of life, we shudder at the bare possibility of becoming such a spectacle.

“ The Miss Wentworths have sent to request that I will give them all the intelligence in my power respecting you. Herbert Campbell, who is here, is also eager to hear of your welfare: he is anxious for

your permission to renew his acquaintance with your daughters.

“ I did not choose to explain to him how they came to be separated from you ; he therefore thinks them as much under your guidance as ever. As I believe he is seriously attracted by your youngest daughter, it may be as well to state that his prospects in life are much better since his embarkation for Gibraltar. He was there appointed *aid-du-camp* to the general, and from his great skill in fortification, bids fair to rise to eminence in his profession. His drawings have been transmitted to the commander in chief in this country, who thought so well of the sketches as to lay them before his sovereign, who has been graciously pleased to signify his approbation, and there is little doubt of his soon receiving some signal mark of favour. Knowing his good qualities and amiable manners so thoroughly as I do, I should think either of the Miss Wentworths fortunate in exciting a permanent attachment in him, unless some
other

other object, already favoured by their regard, should obscure his merit in their eyes.

“I have been introduced to the lover of Mrs. Malcolm. Ah, madam! what a pity it is that two people, so apparently formed for each other, should have been separated. Montgomery enters with avidity into the pleasures of London, trying, by a course of dissipation, “to get the better of his stubborn flame;” but to those at all conversant with the human heart, his efforts to appear gay only evince more strongly that a secret uneasiness is preying upon his mind.

“Mrs. Malcolm’s letters to her brother indicate no wish for returning to the capital, but rather, since she cannot choose her own society, a desire of seclusion. Most carefully do we avoid mentioning her name in the presence of Montgomery: a disclosure of the real state of her feelings might give birth to wishes and hopes that, I trust, are now extinguished. The most exquisite gratifications, if obtained by the violation of any positive duty, how bitter

are the recollections of them! How just is that maxim of Rochefoucault's—" *Il est bien plus aisé d'éteindre un premier, desir, que de satisfaire tous ceux qui le suivent ?*"

"That the most hardened profligate must once have been virtuous, should teach us to guard against the first approaches of vice. Much as I revere the fair sex, sorry am I to be under the necessity of condemning their uncharitableness towards each other.

"Lead us not into temptation," should be aspirated every moment of our lives. How many women are there, who are virtuous only because they have been surrounded by those guards to female chastity which the objects of their censures have been deprived of! I am no advocate for the unblushing woman of quality, who conceives that her high rank and fortune entitles her to be admitted into what is called *good company*, though her infidelity to her lord does not admit of doubt.

"Such characters must excite a general abhorrence, and are despised even by the very creatures that subsist on their bounty.

The

The unsuspecting female, who falls through too much confidence in him to whom her faith is plighted, is condemned without mercy; when one fostering hand might have cheered the drooping penitent, and restored her to the comforts of domestic life. To pour the balm of peace into such a woman's mind, to prevent the desperation which absolute desertion might occasion, is surely the duty of all who profess Christianity; yet, how few are there to be found who put in practice those doctrines, the theory of which they allow to be strictly just.

“The most perfect characters have always the strongest desire to draw a veil over the errors of others;—this, my dear madam, I know to be the case with you; and though exempt, in a great measure, from those blemishes which attend the most spotless mortal, you are ever prone to make allowance for them in those with whom you associate. Believe me always to be, dear madam, your truly devoted friend,

“ROBERT BELTON.”

CHAP. XXX.

“ You have seen sunshine and rain at once :
“ Her smiles and tears were like a better day.
“ Those happy smiles that played on her lip
“ Seemed not to know what guests were in her eyes,
“ Which parted thence as pearls from diamonds
drops.”

SHAKESPEARE.

I REPLIED to this letter, giving the doctor my sanction to the introduction of Captain Campbell ; promising, at the same time, to meet him in London immediately on the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Austen, which happened shortly after.

I am now so nearly arrived at the close of my labours, that most of what follows is already, my dear young friend, known to you. Yet there are minute circumstances which none but myself could relate; and as my history may be deposited in your cabinet for the inspection of your children, I shall narrate as faithfully as if you were ignorant of every occurrence.

On receiving letters from my daughters, specifying the day of their departure from Paris, I arranged my plans so as to be in town before them, and hired a furnished house,

house, that all might be in readiness for their reception.

The meeting you will easily conceive to be an affecting one. Poor Alicia was almost beside herself. "Where are my sisters?" was the first question after embracing me. "I have not seen them, but believe they are anxiously expecting you at Mrs. Parker's."

Forgetful of herself, or the fatigue she had undergone, she instantly begged that a hackney-coach might be sent for, and, in the same breath hoped I would allow her to bring her sisters into my presence. This request I could not well refuse; though I positively forbade any attempt for making them members of our present family. Dr. Belton arriving soon after, I requested him to order his carriage to Charlotte-street, that he might escort the sisters, as I feared Alicia's ardency would make her a very improper protectress on the present occasion. Indeed none was so fit as himself to introduce them to me, who had, since the separation, been almost the only medium through which either party had heard of each other's welfare.

Mr.

Mr. Austen, had he not been fully employed in attending to his wife and me, would at all events have thought it improper, in the first instance, to accompany Alicia, conceiving it absolutely necessary to shew, in the most pointed manner possible, how much he had been offended by Clara and Emily's conduct towards me; and though he permitted their sister to become their advocate, his wife and himself were to consider themselves as much wounded as if they had been a party and directly included with me, when they desired to seek the protection and guardianship of others.

At sight of the groupe entering the room, how did my heart yearn towards the delinquents! The mother rose to my eyes; and the recollection of their inestimable father, with all his goodness, made me ready to fall upon their necks, shedding tears of gladness at their return to duty. These impulses prudence, however, compelled me to check. For their own advantage it was necessary for me to assume an air of severity foreign to my nature. All parties

parties being under restraint, the visit soon ended, Dr. Belton having offered to *re-conduct* the *strangers* to their *home*.

The most pleasurable emotion excited by the proceedings of the evening arose from observing the admiration which the contemplation of Alicia's countenance excited in my good friend Dr. Belton. She appeared so truly amiable as a mediatrix, and betrayed so much earnest solicitude for her sisters, blended with the profoundest veneration for myself, it was hardly possible for any person to behold her unmoved.

Willing, as early as possible, to give the girls the advantage of family protection, I requested Mr. Austen to permit them to reside with him; and to prevent Mr. Caldwell from having any pretext to continue his mock authority, they were to be made wards of chancery, and at the same time to petition for leave to consider Mr. Austen as their guardian. It being signified to the young ladies that this was entered into by their brother-in-law purely to oblige *me*, as I had resolved Alicia alone

alone should live with me, their sorrow for their own ingratitude knew no bounds.

Captain Campbell became now the declared lover of Emily, and was permitted to visit at Mr. Austen's as one who was shortly to be connected with the family.

Determining to pass the winter in town, I took a house in the same neighbourhood, in order that the two families might have frequent intercourse. How often did I congratulate myself on possessing such a daughter as Alicia! who, on the other hand, declared that no inducement should prevail on her to quit me as long as I would permit her to consider my house as her home.

With real satisfaction I perceived that the merit of Dr. Belton made no small impression on her mind, and that in her society he seemed to have no wish ungratified. I had little doubt but that *my* intreaties added to *his*, would soon induce her to change her resolution, and remove to a more permanent home than my house could be considered.

A let-

A letter from Mr. Malcolm to Captain Campbell, requesting that himself and Dr. Belton would take a journey to Berkshire, to visit his wife, roused the two lovers, who could forget their own gratifications, when the calls of friendship required their presence at a distance from their mistresses.

I was not a little pleased that Montgomery, who had been introduced to me by his friend Herbert, had left London for Portsmouth but a few days before the receipt of this summons; he was consequently spared a great deal of anxiety respecting one still very dear to him; and those wounds, which time had in some measure closed, ran no risk of being unnecessarily opened. The brother being ordered to join his regiment, was compelled to return very quickly. Sorry was I to learn from him, that in all appearance his sister's complaints were too firmly rooted to admit of much relief from medicine; seeming to proceed from mental derangement rather than weakness in the animal system.

Sir

Sir Charles and Lady Glanville coming to town at this time, enlivened our party not a little, which, by the absence of our male friends, had taken a little of the *sombre* hue.

An epistle from our mutual friend, you will believe, was not unwelcome to either mother or daughter, though the perusal of some part of it gave us real uneasiness; and his *rencontre* with one heroine afforded no small portion of amusement to both.

“Had it been in my power to communicate any pleasing information, be assured my dear madam, my pen should not thus long have remained unemployed: but in truth, since Herbert left us, I have lost instead of gaining ground with my patient.

“Those who saw Mrs. Malcolm last winter, one of the chief ornaments of the *beau monde*, would, in her present state, hardly recognize the beauty then so justly admired. Her fine eyes, once so sparkling, have lost their lustre; her complexion, formerly so dazzling, has now

no

no brilliancy ; her cheek, indeed, has the appearance of a rose nipped by frost. Her fine turned arm may yet vie with the lily in whiteness, though it has lost the roundness which was its **chief** beauty.

“ Till my arrival she **had** absolutely refused medical aid, saying she would soon be well, for she had no complaints except those which time **would** cure. On our entrance she was **much** agitated, though she had been apprized by Mr. Malcolm of our intended visit, as if voluntary on our parts. When her brother talked of you, and the prospect of an union with your daughter, her countenance became animated—her whole frame seemed renovated. “ I shall then have some claim upon Mrs. Wentworth’s friendship,” said she. “ Would to Heaven she were now with us! She has no weakneses herself, though; how then can I expect her to make allowance for mine? Yet I am certain she **would** not withhold her pity; and I think I **could** tell her all that presses *here*,” laying **her** hand upon her heart, at the same time **looking** fearfully round the room,

room, as if apprehensive of the entrance of some person, none being present at this communication but her brother and myself. Judge, my dear madam, the effect this would have on both of us!

“ Sorry as I am to leave her, without a consoling friend to give her support and comfort, I see that my stay here will be of little avail; you may therefore expect me shortly in London, when I shall make some demands upon you; your reception of which will convince me whether you were sincere in your former offers of friendship. At that time I knew not the value of the object pointed out: I now feel that the happiness or misery of my future life is in her hands, and that such a character must be viewed in its inmost recesses, before its worth can be fully appreciated.

“ To form some judgment of the effect of my prescriptions, I deemed it expedient to absent myself a few days from my patient. In this interval I made an excursion to Bath.

“At one of Rauzzini’s concerts, to which I was accompanied by a friend who resides in that city, a shewy looking figure was pointed out to me as an East India heiress. Before I had obtained a view of her face, “Do you not applaud her discrimination,” added he, “in selecting so swarthy and ill favoured a young woman for her companion? *Her* homely features serve as an excellent foil to set off her own lovely countenance, which however has too much beauty to render such a contrast necessary.”

“At these words, we came near to the sofa on which the two friends were seated. The fair lady by this time noticed that we were making towards her, and with the most affected *nonchalance* continued the conversation with her neighbour, determining not to *seem* to observe us, till we were so near, that it would be unpolite not to return our civilities. With the studied airs of a beauty who is conscious of being the fashion, she lifted up her long dark eye-lashes, and disclosed the pair of twinklers which she intended should pierce at
the

the first glance. The mortified air with which they were cast down can hardly be described. You will, however, readily realize the picture, when I add, that I traced the features of Miss Hartley, and in her dark-complexioned friend I also recognized the daughter of a wealthy tradesman, whom I had seen last winter in town, under the protection of the lady with whom Miss Hartley went to board, on her leaving your family.

“The fascination of this girl’s manners soon gained the affections of her honest-hearted, plain-educated companion, whose purse consequently was at her disposal. She, who had seen little of society, and believed it was pure regard that prompted Miss Hartley to pay her so much attention, in return entered into every plan of amusement projected by the other; and at her suggestion had taken a trip to Bath, where, though every expence was defrayed by Miss Charlton, the other had the dexterity, by her refined manner of expressing herself and affectation of being connected with families of distinction, to
make

make those around believe that it was her who was the lady of fortune, and the other her dependant. Indeed so fearful is Miss Charlton of losing her society, that she anticipates every wish, and thus unwittingly contributes to carry on the deception.

“ My presence, so little expected, had a wonderful effect. She durst not pretend to have forgotten me, though the distant bow I gave her merited very little return. All schemes of conquest, for that evening, at least, were most woefully marred. Resentment flushed her cheek, while fear of detection the next moment overspread it with a livid paleness. Miss Charlton observing these changes, imputed them to the heat of the room, and requested my friend’s assistance for removing into another. I, who knew the cause from whence this proceeded, being convinced that while I was of the party the indisposition would continue, assigned some reason for disengaging myself, and very ungallantly quitted the

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ladies, at the very moment when my assistance appeared most necessary.

“Being obliged to return hither the next day, the lady was left in full possession of her ideal consequence; though I have little doubt that the consciousness of what I could have unfolded will make the remainder of her stay truly irksome.

“Having been called to attend Mrs. Malcolm, I must bid you adieu rather abruptly. Remember you are my *counsel*, and do not let my cause droop on account of my absence. Your truly obliged friend,

“ROBERT BELTON.”

You will believe I carefully concealed from Alicia those parts of Dr. Belton's letter which had any allusion to herself, reserving to another season a disclosure of my views, wishing to let her own judgment direct her in the important article of marriage. As I was satisfied my opinion would have considerable weight, I was only desirous of giving it as a sanction after her's was already formed.

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The pleasure with which she welcomed the gentleman on his return was too visible not to gratify himself. When taking his leave he requested to speak to me alone, and, with a solemnity which almost recalled to my remembrance the hour in which Mr. Glanville's last bequest was put into my hands, gave me a letter, which he said Mrs. Malcolm had conjured him to deliver with all the speed in his power.

When you have perused it, my dear young friend, how will your gentle nature recoil at the sufferings of the writer, and unite with me in execrating the wretch who was the author of her woes.

CHAP. XXXI.

“ Taught hence, ye parents, who from nature stray,
“ And the great ties of social life betray;
“ Ne’er with your children act a tyrant’s part:
“ ’Tis your’s to *guide*, not *violate* the heart;
“ Keep Virtue’s simple path before your eyes,
“ Nor think from *evil*, *good* can ever rise.”

THOMSON.

“ **H**ONOURED and much respected Mrs. Wentworth, would I durst venture to add beloved friend, you are the only person to whom I can render an account of myself, and the reasons which induce me to relinquish the protection of my husband. That name! ah, why did the generous, and to me indulgent, Malcolm ever bear it?

“ You have been told the outlines of my unhappy story previous to my marriage. You have seen Montgomery. How will *he* blush for having honoured so unworthy a creature as I have proved myself with his affection. Dr. Belton must have com-

communicated to you how ardently I longed for an opportunity of cultivating your friendship. Though deprived of a personal acquaintance, I have in idea held converse with you ; and now, when my heart is bursting with grief, it points towards you as to the guardian angel whose benignity is to save me from despair.

“ Excepting Herbert’s advancement, I have not obtained one solid advantage for my family by an alliance with wealth. What have I not lost ! My innocence, that ought to have been dearer to me than life ! My mother may now shed bitter tears ; for that daughter, who was once her pride, will bring reproach upon her grey hairs. My sister too, alas ! how will her heart bleed at the recital of my disgrace ! You know not, my dear madam, what a deserted creature I have been.

“ You may have heard that Mr. Malcolm has a relation in the army : he has been my constant visitant ; and in the country followed me like my shadow. While I had Dr. Belton to converse with, the

major had little opportunity of making himself necessary to my happiness. He, however, at all times availed himself of every favorable moment to engage my attention; and when our visitors had taken their departure, contrived to pass so much of his time with me, that I was surprised at my own want of penetration, in not earlier acknowledging his merit.

“ When he was assured by his own observations of the progress he had made in my favour, he became all at once dejected, striving to hide, if possible, the secret uneasiness which preyed upon him.

“ By some of my correspondents in Scotland I learnt that Montgomery was returned, and that he had when in London entered into every species of dissipation, that I had little reason to regret my inability to fulfill my engagement; which had hitherto pressed so heavily upon me; and more so, since I had seen how little my mother thought of the sacrifice I had made for her ease and comfort.

“ The major, who penetrated into the inmost recesses of my soul, knew that at
this

this moment I was piqued at the indifference of Montgomery. He therefore, in the most careless manner possible, talked of his marrying, and named a lady as the object of his attentions, every way unworthy of him, excepting her large portion.

“ Stung to the quick by these insinuations, I gradually suffered myself to be dictated to by the major; and, in short, to view him in the most prepossessing light. No man has studied the female character with more minuteness, than him I am now speaking of.

“ Finding by my conversation that the natural love of virtue implanted in me, would take the alarm if he attempted to unfold his motives for shewing these assiduities, he chose rather to awaken my sympathy by feigning indisposition; and unless I administered the medicines, all were peremptorily rejected. Occupied by my attendance in the chamber of sickness, my mind at length became wholly engrossed by the object which so constantly presented itself to me. When told that I was the sole cause of the illness which at

that time appeared alarming, I was little disposed to take the only step dictated by prudence—that of absenting myself altogether from his presence. Indeed the strange appearance of such a proceeding was in itself sufficient to deter me; besides, I sincerely believed, that the death of the patient might have followed, had I been guilty of such harshness.

“ From a confidence in our own strength almost all our errors proceed. In an evil hour the sollicitations of the pretended sick man were too strong for my reason. The delirium of the senses was however but of short duration. I awakened to horror and shame. Yet so much was I in the power of the wretch who has destroyed me, that I could not at once tear myself from his society, though I daily resolved every visit I paid him should be the last.

“ Torn asunder by the conflicts I endured, as my perfidious friend recovered his health I began to droop. Deprived of the means of seeing me alone as often as usual, he had the audacity to complain of my rigor, and to use language which I considered

considered insulting. Bursting into tears, I lamented in the bitterest terms the hour in which I had been introduced to the family of Malcolm. The sneer with which he bade me go and seek Montgomery can never be erased from my remembrance. Too soon I felt, to my eternal shame, that I had sacrificed my honour to a libertine, who knew not how to feel an ardent affection for any woman living, and that the difficulty of the conquest only enhanced his triumph.

“ When I communicated my fears that our intercourse would produce a living witness, he laughed at them, adding, had I not an husband to whom such a gift would be acceptable? it was himself who had most reason to repine, as a male child would deprive him of the chance of heir-ing his cousin's fortune.

“ From that moment I never held any conversation with him but in the presence of a third person ; nor could his efforts to obtain an audience have the least effect upon me. Knowing that business obliged him to go to the North, I determined to

take no step till he was some time absent. I even suffered him to depart, without, I believe, his suspecting that it was my positive determination we should meet no more.

“The visible change in my appearance awakened my husband’s fears for my health. The calling in of medical assistance I resolutely opposed, being confident that I must sacrifice my infant, or declare my real situation.

“Dr. Belton’s visit threw me into extreme agitation. Rejoiced as I was to see my brother, most fervently did I pray for his departure. No culprit on the rack could have suffered more than I did while compelled to endure his scrutinizing eye. Dr. Belton imagines that I have followed his prescriptions; and from their failing to have the desired effect, is at a loss what to conclude: as I durst not tell from what source my illness proceeded, I feared, in taking the medicines he prescribed, I might add the crime of murder to that I had already been guilty of.

“The

“ The tears which I have shed have not, I trust, been unheeded by the searcher of all hearts, who will look with an eye of mercy on me in that dread hour when I shall feel far severer pangs than those of childbirth.

“ For the sake of my innocent offspring I hope to live. To present it to my husband as his would be attaining to the climax of guilt.

“ As an atonement for the sin I have committed, I have vowed to work for my child, and to support it by the “ sweat of my brow.” Much as I am overwhelmed with sorrow at the thought of quitting the house of Mr. Malcolm, and wounding his peace by my flight, there is now no other alternative for preserving the little remnant of honour which my seducer has left me. Never shall he invade my retirement. Under a feigned name, and a disguise which I flatter myself will shroud my fatal beauty from observation, I shall pass the remainder of my days.

“ If your compassionate nature will induce you to pour the oil of consolation into

the wounded and contrite spirit, I shall have abundant reason to be thankful. Through Dr. Belton and yourself I may have some communication with a world, of which I shall be no longer deemed an inhabitant. By this means my child may be protected from insult, should I be consigned to the tomb ere it arrive to years of discretion. God forbid, if a female, it should bear any resemblance to its mother; or if of the other sex, that the father's qualities should predominate!

“In a few days I shall put my plan in execution, Mr. Malcolm having appointed to leave home on particular business. Attempt not to dissuade me from what I have firmly resolved on; and promise me that Herbert shall never know the retreat I have chosen; or that yourself or Dr. Belton holds any communication with his sister.

“I know I shall be vilified, and supposed to have become an abandoned wretch. While I am determined that the study of my future life shall be to expiate my former offences, and I recollect the assurance

we

we have received, "that in Heaven there
"is more rejoicing over one sinner that
"repenteth, than ninety and nine just per-
"sons who need no repentance," I will
console myself with the hope, that my
orisons may reach the throne of grace,
and peace once more become an inmate
of my bosom.

"I shall set out immediately after the
delivery of the post letters on Wednesday.
My route is fixed on. Should I hear that
you are desirous of knowing my retreat,
you will receive a line of information in a
fortnight; if not, I must weep in secret,
and believe that I am not worthy of being
acknowledged by any who have been pre-
served from the errors into which I have
fallen.

"Even that state of total seclusion will
be comparative happiness, when I remem-
ber the sleepless nights I have past, while
I feared my sighs would disturb the peace-
ful slumbers of my husband, who suspected
not that I was unworthy of receiving his
caresses. How have I shrunk from his
embrace for months past. But for his
despicable

despicable relation I might in time have had no other desire, save that of proving my gratitude for his unexampled goodness to me and mine.

“ Reflecting upon what I *once was* and what I *now am*, will avail but little. Since I have unbosomed myself to you, I have become more calm ; although there have been intervals when I have dreaded that my senses would forsake me. Say you do not utterly despise me, and that assurance may tend to disperse the clouds that have at times obscured my reason.

“ I know not how to subscribe myself, possessing so little claim as I do to the name of

“ MATILDA MALCOLM.”

CHAP. XXXII.

“I must not think these are evils enough to darken all her goodness. Her faults in her seem, as the spots in Heaven, more fiery by night’s blackness —hereditary rather than purchased.”

SHAKESPEARE.

TO comment upon this letter is hardly possible: not to award our pity to the writer, must prove us altogether devoid of the feelings of humanity. *My* sentiments may be collected from a perusal of my answer.

“Believe me, my dear Mrs. Malcolm, that it is as little in my power to refuse you the appellation of friend, as it is in my nature to peruse the affecting epistle before me without shedding the tear of commiseration for sorrows that at the present moment admit of so little alleviation. That the God of mercy may shed his benign influence over you, and preserve you
to

to enjoy the fruits of your repentance, is my sincere and fervent prayer! Be assured, that whatever service I can render, you may command.

“ In regard to your future subsistence, no exertion on my part shall be wanting to promote any plan which has so laudable an end in view as that of supporting your offspring. At present you may stand in need of pecuniary assistance; consider my purse as your own, and be satisfied I can make no better use of the superfluity with which Heaven has blest me, than in supporting you at such a crisis.

“ Your injunction in regard to Herbert shall be obeyed; though I feel most keenly for the anxiety that must pervade his mind on your disappearing; and trust that you will adopt some mode of assuring Mr. Malcolm of your safety, who doubtless will experience a severe shock in your abandoning his house during his absence.

“ So thoroughly sensible do you appear of the enormity you have been guilty of, that were I less prone to pardon the frailties

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of human nature than I ought to be, I could not, on this occasion, use the language of reproach.

“ Your heart, my amiable friend, has lost none of its original purity. The native dignity of your mind prompts you to act in such a manner as I dare venture to hope will, in the sight of the Supreme Judge, obliterate all of the past that militates against his decrees. The world, however, will not argue with the same lenity. Do not imagine, that in your own character you can ever regain the rank in society which you have lost. Indeed your present determinations lead you not to wish for it.

“ Fortunately the base wretch who has undone you has no hold upon your affections. Ah, my dear madam! how could you believe that one, who sought his own gratifications at the risk of destroying your peace, could entertain any real regard for you? or if he had, that the intercourse, which vice alone could sanction, would not soon extinguish every spark? Believe me, I mean not to reprove, but to console; and if I have said aught to probe you too deeply,

deeply, be assured it is because I take so lively an interest in all that relates to you, that I hardly know how to reconcile myself to the thought of your withdrawing from the world at a time of life when the pleasures of social intercourse are deemed of such value.

“ I hope the spot you have fixed upon for your future residence will not be so distant from the capital as to prevent my sometimes paying you a visit. Dr. Belton shall in due time be made acquainted with the contents of the packet you entrusted to his care; though at present I do not think it expedient to make the communication.

“ That what remains of your journey through this vale of tears may have more comfort in store for you, than to our circumscribed view appears probable, is the fervent wish of her who is, with sincerity of heart, your affectionate friend,

“ C. WENTWORTH.”

The

The shock Mrs. Malcolm's friends received, at hearing of her elopement, can easily be imagined. At the time specified, I had a second letter expressive of gratitude for my goodness, and evincing the satisfaction which she felt from having relinquished the elevated situation she had formerly filled, never having received much enjoyment from the luxuries in her possession, even while innocent : but since having lost her own good opinion, they had become hateful, as reminding her of the dearness of their purchase.

Dr. Belton now learnt from me her whole story. His active benevolence immediately suggested the propriety of paying her a visit, in order to ascertain what kind of shelter she had obtained, and if sure of proper medical assistance when her state of health made recourse to it necessary. I could not but approve so laudable a desire. Fearing, however, that his sudden appearance might be distressing, I apprised the lady of his intentions. His absence was short, as he found every thing
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as comfortable as circumstances could admit of, and that she was attended by a faithful domestic, who had been in the family for many years, having assisted Mrs. Campbell in rearing her children. This information relieved my mind considerably.

Not having known Mr. Malcolm, I did not feel for his loss very poignantly; and neither Mrs. or Miss Campbell were characters, from the traits I have already given of them, to awaken much sympathy on their account.

The generous soldier and the gallant Montgomery, both absent on professional duty, were therefore chiefly the objects of commiseration. The latter I had frequently conversed with, and found him so replete with good sense and amiable qualities, I wondered how any parent could have desired a daughter to forsake such an interesting character, although it were to save herself from extreme want. And this certainly would not have been Mrs. Campbell's condition; for though her state was
fallen,

fallen, she had connexions who would have contributed to the support of herself and daughters. This she knew: but to have her daughter called a *nabobess*, and herself continue mistress of the family mansion, were temptations that were not to be resisted. A dereliction of honour she thought of little consequence; endeavouring to forget that the engagements of Matilda with Ailan were sanctioned by her own and her husband's approbation.

Enjoying great satisfaction in the society of Alicia, and the prospect of her early union with my much-valued friend, I also was equally pleased with Mr. and Mrs. Austen's account of their sisters, who strove, by every means in their power, to endeavour to make us forget they had ever excited our displeasure.

The correspondence between Emily and Mr. Campbell having been permitted by me, there remained but one obstacle to their being speedily united; and that was, the settling an exchange into the guards, which had been nearly completed before he

he received the summons which obliged him to leave Berkshire so abruptly. This having been brought to bear, we were in daily expectation of his return; and it was intended that both marriages should take place on the same day.

CHAP. XXXIII.

“Between the acting of a dreadful thing and the first motion, all the interim is like a phantasma, or a hideous dream. The genius and the mortal instruments are then in council; and the state of man, like to a little kingdom, suffers then the nature of an insurrection.”

SHAKESPEARE.

DR. Belton's non-appearance for four-and-twenty hours surprised and alarmed both my daughter and myself. His having left my house the preceding evening, apparently in perfect health, led to no conclusion that indisposition was the cause of his absence.

Though a prey to uneasiness myself, I endeavoured to make Alicia believe that some professional engagement had taken him suddenly out of town, and that the next day all would be accounted for. Determining, however, to satisfy my own fears, I sent, as early the next morning as propriety would admit, one of my own domestics to the house of Dr. Belton.

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His return, you will believe, did not calm them, when I found he had been told by the doctor's servants, that the day before Mr. Campbell had arrived in a post-chaise, eagerly inquiring if their master was at home; that on being informed he was not, though shortly expected, he left word he should return in an hour; that at that time they met, and conversed together apparently in great warmth; Mr. Campbell having quitted the house most abruptly, and under considerable agitation.

After this interview, Dr. Belton passed the evening in his study, desiring that none might be allowed to approach him; nor did the family believe he had taken any rest, or even gone to bed; that at six o'clock in the morning a gentleman to whom he had written the preceding evening called for him in a hackney-coach, but whither they were gone no one knew, no orders having been given to the coachman in their hearing.

Figure to yourself, my dear friend, my distraction at this moment. The two dearest

dearest friends, and who shortly were to become brothers, armed against each other's life!

The impetuosity of the young Scotfman had most likely not permitted him to hearken to reason. Suspecting his friend to have been the betrayer of his sister, the other's rigidity of honour, in not utterly disclaiming all knowledge of her since she quitted the house of her husband, would confirm those suspicions, which, bound as Belton was, both to Mrs. Malcolm and myself, he could not remove by an avowal of her real situation, and the means by which he became acquainted with it.

Willing to spare my daughter's feelings as long as I possibly could, immediately after breakfast I ordered the carriage, and took her to Mr. Austen's, saying, I had business to settle in the city that could afford her no amusement, therefore her morning had better be passed with her sisters.

Driving directly to Dr. Belton's house, I there encountered all I both dreaded and expected. He had been brought home by his second dangerously wounded,

while Campbell was left on the field with little hopes of life. The gentlemen who attended each party as seconds were not apprised of the cause of the duel. The challenge being given by Captain Campbell, the other insisted on his taking the first fire, which was as strenuously refused. Chance having decided this point, Herbert fired, his ball grazing the shoulder of his antagonist, who instantly discharged his pistol in the air. The seconds interposing, requested to bring the dispute to an amicable issue. The challenger cried out,—
“On no other ground will I hold a parley than my opponent declaring that he has held no communication with my sister since she quitted Berkshire.” On Belton’s refusing to comply, the other drew his sword, saying—“Come on, then; here your dastardly caution will not avail; and I know you to be equal master of the sword with myself.”

The heat of the young soldier made his skill of little use; Belton, who acted purely upon the defensive, might easily have disarmed him; willing, however, to let his passion

passion spend itself, he parried his thrusts till the impetuous youth threw himself upon his sword. While entirely off his own guard, by anxiety for his friend's safety, he suffered himself to be wounded in the sword-arm. Both, therefore, fell at the same instant: surgeons were called to the aid of the one, while the other, less dangerously hurt, was borne off, who, possessing his recollection, insisted on being carried to his own house, as, let the issue be what it would, he was determined not to abscond.

Happy was I to hear, that, on examination, the wound was pronounced of little consequence, provided a fever did not ensue, which could not be immediately ascertained.

How to meet my daughters was the next consideration. From Alicia's strength of mind I expected every possible exertion, but Emily, I knew, would be overwhelmed by the tidings I had to communicate. I had however little time for deliberation, it being necessary to hasten to Mr. Austen's, lest the fatal intelligence

should be there before me. Mr. Austen came out to meet me, consequently I had an opportunity of relating to him the events of the morning; to soften matters to the young people as much as possible was our determination.

You will easily conceive that all our efforts could hardly preserve them from the despair which such a catastrophe must excite. Our uncertainty respecting Herbert made Emily almost frantic: Mr. Austen's first care, therefore, was to endeavour to find out the medical people who had attended him, in order to learn where he was lodged, as well as the state of his wounds.

Many anxious hours of suspense were we compelled to endure ere he returned with the wished-for intelligence, which, when communicated, gave but little relief to either party; for, from what could be collected, there seemed scarce a probability of Mr. Campbell's recovery.

Alicia appeared to be petrified. Why the duel had taken place, or on what grounds *her* lover could have excited the displeasure

sure of the intended husband of her sister, seemed, to her view, inexplicable. Emily had not sufficient command of her senses to be able to trace effects to their causes ; all that she could think of was her beloved Herbert, dying of wounds which he appeared to have fought for himself, at the very moment when all obstacles to their mutual happiness were surmounted, and, in idea, she had plighted her faith to him, with the hope of being separated no more.

Leaving her in the charge of her two sisters, Alicia and myself, early in the evening, took our leave. On calling at Dr. Belton's door in our way home, we were truly rejoiced to hear that he had slept some hours, and awoke so much refreshed by it there was now little apprehension of any violent fever, so that *his* recovery at least might be shortly expected.

During our ride home I could not help reflecting on the baleful effects of criminal indulgences : by a single deviation from virtue in one member of an honourable family how much misery had ensued ! not only to those immediately connected with

her, but to all who were so much in her vortex as to be favoured with the appellation of Friend. * * * *

* * * *

When Dr. Belton was sufficiently recovered to admit of conversing with his friends, I paid him a visit of condolence, and this before we had been permitted to indulge one hope of the re-establishment of his opponent.

You will readily believe the poor convalescent was truly rejoiced to see me; the kind wishes and congratulations which I carried from his mistress contributed not a little to elevate him; when the recollection of the fate that probably awaited his friend, and the consequent blow which so many of those to whom he was attached would receive, in a moment o'erhung his brow with a cloud which all my efforts could not dispel.

“Ah, madam!” cried he, “could you have believed that *I* would have figured in the character of a duellist? God knows how much I endeavoured to avoid it, and that I would willingly have made any sacrifice

crifice in which only my own ease was concerned, in order to pacify my dear Herbert; but nothing short of abusing the confidence reposed in me by his sister could have accomplished that point.

“ By his letters from Scotland he understood that report there had pointed *me* out as the object who had induced her to quit the protection of her husband.

The author of this calumny may be easily traced, as well as the motive which prompted him to fabricate it. Conscious that I had always been the friend and counsellor of Mrs. Malcolm, the major has thought it not impossible, when he called to mind the situation in which he had left her, but that in such an exigency, when bereft of all support from her own family, she might have recourse to my advice and assistance.

“ Mortified, as he must have been, at the contempt with which she treated him previous to his departure, and, no doubt, eager to have an opportunity of making his peace, which, under such circumstances, he might deem no difficult matter,

he considered such a hint would lead the brother to discover her retreat ; of which circumstance he hoped to receive some information from Miss Campbell, with whom, I am told, he continues the same flirtation began in London during last winter.

“ Judge, my dear madam, of my astonishment at such an accusation ! The false maxims of honour, which a residence in the world makes it necessary to put in practice, compelled me to do what my soul abhorred : that my hot-headed friend rushed upon danger, all who were present can testify : I yet hope we shall meet again on the footing of friendship, and that my beloved Alicia will not have to salute me as the destroyer of her sister’s happiness.”

Finding our conversation was become too interesting for a sick man I took my leave, returning homeward to give Alicia the pleasing information she had so richly deserved from the uncommon fortitude she had exemplified from the first moment of being made acquainted of the cause of her

her lover's sufferings; believing that in succouring the afflicted mourner he would receive his reward, though death seemed at first to be the only fruit of his benevolent exertions for her sake.

CHAP. XXXIV.

" 'Tis good for men to love their present pain upon example, so the spirit is eased ; and when the mind is quickened, out of doubt, the organs, though defunct and dead before, break up their drowsy grave, and newly move with casted slough and fresh legerity."

SHAKESPEARE.

I HAD scarcely finished my account of the visit when a letter, which had been delivered during my absence, was brought to me, on which I immediately discerned the post-mark of the town nearest to the place of Mrs. Malcolm's residence.

The black wax gave me a palpitation of the heart which would hardly suffer me to break the seal in order to ascertain why it was made use of. When I found that the signature was that of the faithful domestic before mentioned, to whose care Mrs. Malcolm was confided, I anticipated the event she was to relate,—but alas ! I little conceived in what manner it had been occasioned.

As

As some amusement in her solitary retreat, our *fair penitent* took in a newspaper, which served to inform her of the welfare of many of her connexions with whom she now held no intercourse, and beguiled also a tedious hour.

Most unfortunately the editors of that she was accustomed to peruse had obtained a statement of the duel, and though it was worded in so ambiguous a manner that few who were not acquainted with the parties could understand the cause of it, yet to one so immediately interested as poor Mrs. Malcolm, every line told to her heart.

It might be naturally expected, on the first rumour of such a rencontre, that the facts would be misrepresented and the consequences exaggerated. The account that met the eye of the dejected recluse, stated, that the physician was killed on the spot, and the officer's wounds considered so desperate as to afford but little hope of his surviving the effects of them.

Perceiving that she was the murderess both of her brother and his friend, her

senses forsook her. The violence of her fall, as well as the dreadful shock her mind had received, brought on a premature labour, and though she was safely delivered of a fine boy, who was likely to do well, yet her own life paid the forfeit, as the high fever that followed the birth of the child was entirely to be imputed to the agitation of her spirits, and the horror which seemed to have taken possession of her since the perusal of the fatal paragraph.

In one of her lucid intervals she had desired her servant to write to me, which the good creature would willingly have done while she was living had she known my address.

It had been always Mrs. Robertson's intention to communicate to Dr. Belton the tidings of her mistress's *accouchement*, who had herself given this order along with a direction to his house in London. The account in the paper of the duel, and of his death precluded this; for though he were still living, there could be no certainty of the letter reaching the hands of any confidential

fridential person ; and considering the malevolent reports already circulated, any correspondence being discovered to have passed between the parties would, without doubt, tend to its confirmation.

These reasons for the silence of Mrs. Robertson, till the death of her mistress gave her an opportunity of seeking for my address among her papers, had so much validity in them that I knew not where to affix any blame, and could only lament the cruel combination of circumstances that had suffered this amiable and truly unfortunate woman to encounter disease and death without one friendly hand to support her wearied head, and sooth her soul to peace.

The medical gentleman who had attended her, proved himself a true Samaritan. Finding, from the conversation of those about his patient, that there was a mysterious veil which enveloped her that he must not seek to penetrate, he forbore requesting that her friends might be apprised of the danger which threatened her life, watching her himself with the most
anxious

anxious solicitude, and procuring a nurse to suckle the child, which had not been thought of, as the mother intended to perform that office herself.

This excellent man was with her at the moment of dissolution, not having quitted her bedside for some hours, being certain she could not survive till morning. She expired with her hand in his, leaving behind her an awful monument of the dangerous consequences of vice.

Her punishment being so severe in this life, and the prospect before her so dreary, I endeavoured to believe that the Almighty, as a token of his forgiveness, had thus early recalled her immortal part to its native skies.

After perusing this affecting detail, you will believe Alicia and myself were still more anxious for the recovery of Captain Campbell, there being now no obstacle to a perfect reconciliation between him and his friend.

By the time Dr. Belton was able to leave his own house, we enjoyed the satisfaction of hearing that a visit from me would be acceptable.

acceptable in the other quarter. I was not long in availing myself of this permission.

Though weak in body his intellects were more vigorous; and sincerely did I rejoice to discover in the sick man a thorough contempt for those pernicious principles which had brought *himself* to the verge of eternity, and might also have caused him to murder the very man whose life he should have sought to preserve.

Perceiving him so tranquil, I ventured to speak of his sister; the name brought tears into his eyes. Read, my dear madam, said he, her husband's letter to me, written since her death, and see if the vengeance of Heaven is not likely to pursue the violator of female honour.

I transcribe it, as the most effectual way of your judging of the character of the writer:

“ Brothers as we are in affliction, suffer me, my dear Herbert, to assure you, that though the tie which united us is dissolved, you have still as firm a hold of my esteem
and

and regard, as before these extraordinary events took place, which had nearly deprived the world of two useful members of society, and has bereaved me of a treasure I was too little worthy of possessing.

“ Had you, my dear friend, been on the spot at the time I was introduced to your family, how much misery might have been prevented.

“ The vanity and parading nonsense of your mother (the recollection of which now maketh the heart to sicken) determined her to lay siege to me on my first arrival in Argyleshire, whether for herself or one of her daughters I was at a loss to determine, being attracted by neither (for I saw not Matilda till after I had made the purchase); the discovery only excited pity and contempt. My sentiments were however suddenly changed, when I beheld the radiance of those eyes, and the symmetry of that heavenly form, who, I trust, is now one of the blissful choir above.

“ I knew not of any prior engagement. Intoxicated as I was with the contemplation of her charms, had I been made acquainted

quainted with it, I should have repressed my own desires, and endeavoured to contribute to her happiness, by promoting her union with Montgomery. I sought not for a reluctant hand; the consciousness of receiving it in obedience to the mandate of an unfeeling parent, would have embittered the gift.

“The bashful timidity with which she permitted my addresses, I imputed to innate modesty: and believing that her retired manners and fallen fortunes had kept her from mixing much in society, I flattered myself that I might possess the power of securing her affections.

“To a son I ought not to draw a lively picture of a mother’s foibles. You saw when in London the necessity of separating her from my wife, or, ample as my fortune is, there might have been some risk of its being impoverished, for I knew not how to refuse whatever sums she chose to ask for. Intending to go to Scotland early in the autumn, I permitted Miss Campbell to leave us at the same time her mother did.

“The

"The change so evident in Matilda, on our retiring from the metropolis, surprised me not a little. She seemed to pine in the midst of company, and to rejoice when freed from the restraint which their presence occasioned. My perfidious relation continuing his visit, made me less desirous of securing any female companion for my wife, which, had I been at all sensible of her having any secret source of uneasiness previous to our marriage, I should certainly have made a point of doing, and, on the first discovery of her pensiveness, have requested the attendance of her sister.

"From what has followed I may truly say, *"Who should be trusted, when one's own right hand is perjured to the bosom?"* Let us leave the wretch to the poignancy of his own reflections; from them he will experience a severer punishment than any in our power to inflict.

"You have already lifted your arm against innocence, which, I trust, will, in future, prevent your forming too hasty conclusions. Mrs. Robertson's recitals of Dr. Belton's goodness to her mistress, and the
attentions

attentions of Dr. Frankland, will make me almost venerate the character of a physician, lightly as I have hitherto been accustomed to treat them in their professional capacity.

“ The child is under my own roof with its nurse, both consigned to the immediate charge of the faithful creature, who assisted in watching over the infancy of its mother, and who saw her body consigned to the *narrow house*. I have named him Malcolm Campbell, and shall secure funds for his subsistence and education, should I die before he has attained the age of twenty-one. At that period I intend he shall be master of his mother’s family estate, and shall take proper measures to ensure his bearing the name, with permission for using the arms. Had his father borne any other, the sweet fellow should have been *Malcolm* both in christian and surname.

“ I have barred the succession of my family estate from the major, settling it on his second brother, who is married, and has an amiable offspring, with a very slender fortune to support them.

“ I trust

“ I trust any other disposition of my property which I may be induced to make will militate as little against justice as those I have already named to you ; and that you will unite with me in trying to rear the tender plant, cast by Providence on our compassion.

“ That I may soon hear of your renovated health, is my fervent wish. Believe me to be your affectionate brother,

“ MURDOCH MALCOLM.”

That the possession of wealth had not seared this man's heart, or blunted his feelings, his conduct on this momentous occasion fully evinced. The death of the mother having secured to her infant a powerful protector, was some alleviation to her sorrowing relatives for the loss they had sustained.

* If the powers of reflection were at all active in the parent, after her delivery, she must have rejoiced that her child was not of that sex to meet reproach on account of its birth, or to feel acutely the loss of a mother's care. ||

CHAP. XXXV.

“ But happy they, the happiest of their kind,
“ Whom gentler stars unite, and in one fate
“ Their hearts, their fortunes, and their beings
blend.”

THOMSON.

AFTER encountering so many disappointments, the day for the double marriage was at length fixed upon.

Emily, when she once more beheld her beloved Herbert, in perfect health, and as much devoted to her as ever, soon regained her usual vivacity. Dr. Belton and Alicia, already thoroughly acquainted with the characters of each other, both from their own observation and communications from me, stood every chance of finding that tranquil happiness in the married state so truly desirable to the possessor, and so seldom to be attained.

Montgomery had requested to receive notice of the day when his friend's nuptials were to be celebrated, that he might make an exertion to accompany him to the altar,
when

when he was to receive Heaven's choicest best gift—the hand of the woman he loved.

You will believe this happy conclusion afforded me sincere pleasure, and that all parties united in endeavouring to shew the respect and gratitude to which, as the promoter of the general felicity, I was entitled.

That Clara appeared to attract in no small degree the attention of Montgomery, was not in my eyes the least pleasing occurrence of the day. You already know, my dear friend, that this became a permanent attachment; and that I have had the satisfaction of convincing my daughters that their honourable and advantageous settlements in life were, under Providence, entirely owing to me.


Each of their husbands being men of sense, and desirous of obtaining rational, well-informed companions, with whom they might pass their lives, considered, from the manner in which these young women had been educated, and the advantages they had enjoyed, of being introduced

duced into life under my auspices, they were most likely to possess those requisites for domestic happiness which they sought for in a wife.

Personal attractions may gain many admirers, but it is the culture of the heart and mind that insures esteem and conciliates affection. These qualifications, added to a thorough sense of the blessings we enjoy under the rational system of religion and mild government, exercised in the country that affords us protection, are possessions of which no reverse of fortune can bereave us.

This truth cannot be too strongly impressed on the minds of the rising generation; for in the rage for innovation and false hypotheses, with which of late years this part of the world has been deluged, *vice* has been so blended with *virtue*, that it requires no small share of discrimination to discern the good precepts which are scattered through works of the most pernicious tendency.

That there should be advocates found for abolishing the law of marriage, and
sanction-



sanctioning that promiscuous intercourse between the sexes, at which human nature recoils, would not excite surprise, were they only to be met with among the profligate.

When men of genius, who profess to be desirous of reforming mankind, and of meliorating the condition of the unfortunate captive, who wears the galling chain of slavery because his complexion is of the jetty hue, assist in disseminating such doctrines, are we not ready to breathe a wish that the pen which they wield might possess the properties of Ithuriel's spear, holding up to their view the miserable state of society, should such Utopian schemes ever be realised.

And now, my dear Miss Middleton, you have before you a faithful transcript of my heart. Its wanderings have been recorded, in order to enable you faithfully to appreciate its *merits* and *demerits*.

That I have, during the whole course of my life, endeavoured to contribute to the happiness of those I was connected with, and to consider my own gratifications in a
secondary

secondary point of view, when they militated against rectitude, I flatter myself a recital of past transactions has fully evinced.

The character of a *step-mother* (in general deemed an odious one) I will allow to be the most difficult to fill of any allotted to our sex. That *I* found *my task* a most arduous one, is but too true; yet the recollection of having supplied a mother's place to Mr. Wentworth's daughters, and that when in a state of infancy they testified the same affection for me as if I had been really so, served to repay me for all my cares. That this is now cemented into that lasting attachment, which can end only with my existence, constitutes my chief enjoyment.

I consider the little interruption to our domestic felicity, occasioned by the machinations of Miss Hartley, as a fortunate circumstance; for few of us form a just estimate of the blessings in our possession till we have known their loss.

Having conducted you through so great a variety of scenes, and introduced you to

so many personages, it is now incumbent on me to wind up my narrative by relating what has since befallen them.

Majór Malcolm finding himself despised by his own family, and shunned by most of his acquaintance, procured his exchange into a regiment under orders for Canada, where he arrived in safety, but whether still in the land of the living is quite problematical; for having sallied forth one morning, unattended, from a settlement on the frontiers, near which there was an Indian town, he has never since been heard of.

Various have been the conjectures on his fate; some imagining, that being weary of life he had put an end to his own existence by leaping from one of those prodigious eminences with which that country abounds. Had this been the case, the torrent of waters must soon have swept away the body, which would naturally account for the mystery which attended his disappearing.

Others again believe that he has voluntarily relinquished the comforts of civilized society; and since he could not be a

Thane

Thane in his own country, contents himself with being considered the oracle of a savage people to whom he makes himself both necessary and useful.

Miss Hartley still bears that name; nor is she likely to persuade any *fool* on earth to hinder her from leading *apes* below: in short, though possessed of elegant competency, (her father's estate having proved more productive than was expected,) she has the mortification of seeing all her efforts to embitter the happiness of others prove abortive, and that she lives in the world an insulated being without attachments, and always fearful that in the polished circles, in which she is ambitious of moving, she may meet some one who will recognise her as the sister of James Hartley, whose conduct has been so notorious, it is not at all probable he will ever see the outside of the Marshalsea prison.

Sir Charles and Lady Glanville are the happy parents of a numerous offspring, and have never had cause to repent the day on which they plighted their faith at the altar. Mr. Brummell having retired

from the commercial world, and prudently abandoned all thoughts of a second marriage, is occupied with schemes for paying off the national debt, and the future aggrandisement of his grand-children, for whom he feels a sincere affection, and in their grateful attentions and innocent endearments finds gratifications which he would in vain seek for elsewhere.

Lady George Selby and Lady Darnley are also patterns of domestic felicity, proving themselves excellent mothers as well as affectionate wives.

Mr. Malcolm still retains Mrs. Robertson in his house, who has the satisfaction of seeing her young charge improve both in mind and person; and that his generous protector is as much attached to him as a father could be to an only son.

Mrs. Campbell did not long survive her daughter. She could ill brook the disgrace brought on her family; and when she remembered that the ill consequences of the marriage might be entirely imputed to her love of grandeur, and that she was the sole promoter of it, it is nowise surprising

prising that her frame soon sunk under the weight of her own reflections. Miss Campbell is now at Edinburgh, her brother Herbert having settled on her an income sufficiently ample to enable her to live in that city very comfortably, and this is frequently augmented by liberal presents from Mr. Malcolm, who, however, held no communication with the lady till after the death of her mother.

You know that I pass three months in every year with my daughter Belton in London; and by occasional visits to her sisters, as well as their all assembling once a year at Clarmont, we are still like one large family. You have been present when we have had the additional satisfaction of Sir Charles and Lady Glanville's society, along with the Belton family from Lancashire, who are no more elated by prosperity than they were depressed by adversity.

That, in the long-run, *vice* is its own punisher, and *virtue* has its reward, a very cursory view of the world suffices to convince us. If the perusal of these pages has
a ten-

a tendency, in any single instance, to preserve the wavering soul from guilt, or to give fortitude to suffering innocence, then will the time which the writer has bestowed on their composition be most abundantly compensated for; and you, my dear girl, as the cause which excited her to wield the pen, be considered as an instrument of doing good; an appellation, believe me, of infinitely more value than all to which youth and beauty can, on their own account, lay claim.

That you may long enjoy the advantages of your present situation, and strive to forget past events, that have tinged your mind with melancholy, and led you to reflect, at a very early period of life, on the uncertainty of human enjoyments, is the ardent prayer of your truly affectionate friend,

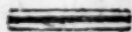
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| 98 | 6 | For <i>oppennes</i> read <i>openness</i> . |
| 120 | 2 | For <i>immediate</i> read <i>immediately</i> . |
| 121 | 19 | Read <i>you</i> before <i>in</i> . |
| 123 | 25 | For <i>bad</i> read <i>has</i> . |